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ABSTRACT

The 20 essays in this collection are based on a project undertaken by the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Model Literacy Project in 1983-85. (The goal of the project was to institute changes within the CCC to enhance the literacy of corpsmembers.) Essays describe innovative approaches to literacy education, analyze bureaucratic structures, and describe the projects undertaken. The essays are "Teaching is Remembering" (Michael Holzman); "The 'Me' Series" (Olga Connolly); "Reading Exposure and the Development of Literacy" (Steve Krashen); "Hooked on Books in the CCC" (Betty Bamberg); "Interviews for Literacy" (Larry Wayman); "Literacy as a Catalyst for Second Language Acquisition" (Judith Rodby); "Theater as a Literacy Environment" (Michele Weathers); "Special Cases" (Irene Clark); "Tutoring Alphabetic Illiterates" (Lee Leeson); "Trivial Pursuit" (Elspeth Stuckey); "Literacy Journal" (Douglas Cazort); "Literacy in the Kitchen" (Sid Sondergard); "Allentown II" (DeDe Gallow); "The U.S.C. Literacy Spike: May 1984" (Elspeth Stuckey); "Epistemology of the Oppressed" (Emily Hicks); "An Account of the Initial Phase of the MLP" (DeDe Gallow); "Teacher as Homeboy--A British View of the Model Literacy Program" (Jane Mackillop); "Talk, Cross-Talk, and Adult Literacy" (Lee Leeson); "Critical Review of Literacy Campaign" (Frank Gaik); and "In Conclusion: Creating Literacy Environments" (Michael Holzman). (YLB)

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WORKPLACE LITERACY

Essays from the Model Literacy Project

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Workplace Literacy

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Preface

The essays and documents in this collection are based on a project undertaken by the California Conservation Corps and the Model Literacy Project at the University of Southern California in 1983-85. The goal of the project was to institute changes within the California Conservation Corps in order to enhance the literacy of corpsmembers. The Model Literacy Project is devoted to literacy research within specific institutional contexts. It includes a faculty/graduate student/staff seminar in literacy chaired by Steve Krashen and has close connections with the USC/California Writing Project, the graduate program in Rhetoric, Literature, and Linguistics, and the Freshman Writing Program at USC. Approximately twenty members of the Model Literacy Project participated in the work with the CCC. The approach to literacy education developed by the Model Literacy Project is that culture, economics, and administration are mutually determinate within systems which express the lives of individuals. Change best occurs as the result of the dialectical consideration of the system as a whole and the needs and desires of the individuals implicated in the system. The activity of the Model Literacy Project researchers was to assist the CCC staff and corpsmembers as individuals in the analysis of the CCC as a system with respect to the issue of literacy.

The California Conservation Corps is a state agency offering "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions," to young adults, 18-23 years in age. There are about three thousand corpsmembers enrolled at any given moment; some five thousand go through the CCC centers each year. Supervisory personnel are civil service employees, some with forest service experience, some from social work backgrounds, some who came up through the Corps itself. CCC work includes stream clearance, trail building, emergency flood control, and similar tasks. The ethnic distribution of the Corps reflects that of the state itself, but the three Urban Centers -- San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego -- tend to have more than their share of minority corpsmembers. The CCC offers a job and training in basic job skills and work discipline, along with some educational programs, including GED instruction.

Although these essays and the experiences upon which they were based are closely tied to the somehwat unusual nature of the California Conservation Corps, they should be of interest to all who participate in educational matters in an institutional context. Teachers will find many of the situations described here familiar and may find useful the many innovative approaches to literacy education developed by the researchers. Administrators will concern themselves, perhaps, with the details of the analysis of bureaucratic structures which have significantly transformed a large governmental agency. Researchers and theorists will wish to replicate or criticize the projects we undertook and thus add to our knowledge of the relations between learning and its social and institutional contexts.

The story begins with an account of how we all met.

Olga Connolly
Michael Holzman

Teaching Is Remembering

This essay was written at the half-way point for the project. It now seems a bit naive and simplistic, but still valuable as a document regarding the culture clash resulting from the encounter of a group of academics and the somewhat excessively real-world organization and personnel of the CCC. Michael Holzman was still thinking primarily in terms of research and schools applications when he wrote this. Later we all came to see that research and literacy work were best considered as part of a single system.

Teaching is Remembering

by Michael Holzman

Teaching is Remembering

The intercom buzzed.

"Yes?"

"Olga Something on line one."

"Thanks."

It was a few days before the spring final examination for Composition 101. I was in my normal condition for the occasion: exhausted, nervous, and bored. It's hard to maintain all three of these at the same time, but I understand that night nurses and soldiers on guard duty are familiar with the required techniques. Olga Something was a CETA clerk with the County--I thought that was what she said--and wanted me to help with writing there. Oh yes, happy to, but a little busy right now, could you call back in ten days?

The intercom buzzed.

"Yes?"

"That Olga person on line one."

"Really?"

People in Los Angeles don't usually call back when they say they will; it must be the Hollywood influence. Yet here was Olga, right on schedule, calling back on the tenth day. It turned out that she was not a CETA clerk. She was working with the California Conservation Corps, Jerry Brown's reincarnation of the Depression era Civilian Conservation Corps. Could she talk with me about teaching the Corpsmembers to write? Sure, the grades were in and I had nearly forgotten about being exhausted, nervous, and bored. I found Irene and Betty and told them that Olga Something would be talking with us the next day, about basic writing, I thought. (Irene Clark was Director of our Writing Center, Betty Bamberg was then Director of the USC/California Writing Project--they were among the usual suspects for meetings like this.)

Olga told us that the new CCC employs people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three at the minimum wage on one-year contracts. They clear brush, fight fires, work at emergency sites, are kept to fairly severe work discipline. There were sixty at the Los Angeles Urban Center of the CCC, which happened to be just across the street from USC. Bruce Saito, the Director there, had agreed to include a literacy component in his daily schedule. Half the Corps members were without high school diplomas, one third were Hispanic, ten or so are recent immigrants from South East Asia. Would we teach them how to read and write better?

Oh, sure, nothing better to do, have Mr. Saito send me an official letter. We bureaucrats always want official letters.

After the meeting, Betty said: "Do you know who that was?"

"Ah, didn't she say her name was Olga Connolly?"

"She's that Czech athlete who eloped with an American at the 1956 Olympics."

I later learned that Olga had stopped competing in the Olympics after her fifth participation in the Games. And she hadn't really eloped. Anyway, she had worked on projects for inner-city youth, worked (indeed) with CETA, and was now a consultant to the California Conservation Corps.

The next morning, at 7:30, we went over to the CCC operation, which is housed in an old National Guard Armory. We all admired the high ceilings. Then Bruce found us and took us into the room where the Corpsmembers were. They wore khaki uniforms, sat with their arms folded, stared at us. Olga helped a lot. She said: "This is Michael Holzman." They all stared at me. I'm not used to this sort of thing. Mostly I write memoranda and make speeches to teachers. "The People" is a nice concept, but hard to face at 7:30 a.m. in the form of doxens of very strong black and brown young adults. The uniforms also did not help. Were they prisoners, soldiers, cops? There was nothing to be done. I talked about how important it is to know how to read and write. Then I asked for questions. Three Corpsmembers asked the same question: "When do we start?" I could deal with that. We would form small groups and begin writing. Betty gave me a "You could have warned me" look, shrugged, and took eight Corpsmembers off in search of a room with a table. Mr. Saito's letter arrived the following Monday; classes started Tuesday.

Wednesday morning I met Steve Krashen in the park between the Hall of Humanities and the Administration building (this was my usual locale, symbolically). I told him about the CCC. He said: "You're in over your head."

"I know."

"What are you going to do?"

"Round up some good teachers, use small groups--individual tutorials if any of the CCC people turn out to be actually illiterate."

"Let me know how it goes."

"Sure."

We found ten instructors for the sixty CCC people. We put those Corpsmembers who could not speak English into one group (they named themselves "The Internationals"; ESL apparently has a pejorative meaning) and grouped the others at random. During the second meeting we found one person who could only read his own name and the word "the." At the next meeting we found three more. We put two of these students with Irene, two with another instructor, improvised materials. (We actually had some good things on hand that had been developed to help the athletics department.) In the second week of the collaboration between the CCC and our writing instructors something rather odd happened. I didn't understand it at first. It began when twenty of the CCC people had been sent to the Colorado River to sandbag resorts and houses there. That left some of our groups with six students, some with one or two. When I tried to rearrange people, to even out the groups at four, the students resisted. They wanted to stay with their particular instructors. "Wanted" is a mild way of putting it. They refused to be regrouped. I found this a bit annoying, but when the instructors sided with the students there was nothing that I could do about it, no matter how strong my drive toward organizational symmetry. I decided to make the best of a bad deal and went off to think about the meaning of this resistance. Just calling it "resistance" made me feel better; it sounded vaguely clinical, made me feel in intellectual if not bureaucratic control of the matter.

The next day I was talking to a secondary-school teacher who specializes in teaching basic reading to students at a high school just off campus, that is, near Watts. I told her about our CCC class and asked how it happened that so many of these young people had been through the public schools but, like her students, had learned little.

"You know," she said, "the classes are so large and the school must do so many different things. And you can't isolate the children from the community. Truancy is such a big problem."

Truancy. Absenteeism. If the students are not in school, they can hardly be taught much.

"At my school the attrition rate is 135% a year. And you hardly ever have more than four or five students in the class three days running. The others come and go."

And, in spite of the best efforts of the teachers, they are forgotten. The teachers, naturally enough (with five classes of thirty or forty students each day), concentrate on the students who are there, not those who are absent. When does this start? At the beginning. We like to believe that in the United States every eight year old is free to go to school. This is true for students from Watts and for students from Beverly Hills. All have equal opportunities. Some have home environments which encourage schooling; some have home environments which are indifferent to it; in some home environments unemployment among young adult males is over fifty percent, violence is endemic, twelve year old girls become prostitutes, gangs recruit in the junior high school corridors. By fourth grade matters are sufficiently advanced for the less fortunate children; tracking will take care of the rest. Students who have missed a crucial week or two of work on reading or writing are relegated to less intensively supervised parts of the educational system. They grow bored. They learn little after that. They are forgotten.

Which brought me back to my stubborn CCC students. Their reluctance to be separated from their instructors was not whimsical or arbitrary. They had been forgotten before; they did not wish to be forgotten again. The seemingly arbitrary nature of their identification with instructors whom they had barely met dimply testified to the intensity of their feelings. If Doug Cazort or Judith Rodby knew their names, seemed interested in their lives and education, that was sufficient--it was practically unique in their experience. No wonder that they were unwilling to risk a new organization, risk exposure to a new representative of middle-class society. The evidence of their own experience was that such a new person would not care about them. Why take risks?

It is not necessary to analyze the consequences of neglect from an ethical or humanitarian angle. The economic context will suffice. The most avanced sectors of the industrialized world now are those which produce and distribute not goods but information. In the United States, where these changes are not cushioned or concealed by traditional social structures or consistent state intervention, the result is the obsolescence of entire industries, and, in a movement parallel to that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, of entire categories of workers. Where the development of mass production eliminated the need for skilled craftspersons (weavers, for instance) in favor of unskilled workers and machines, now it is the unskilled and semi-skilled workers who are becoming superfluous. The bottom steps of the social ladder have been sawn off.

Let me give a very recent example of this. A common path for social advancement in the middle part of the twentieth century was through clerical work, the most basic type of which might be taken as that of a bank teller. Even a recent emigrant with basic English skills could stand at a bank counter eight hours a day, accepting deposits, certifying withdrawals. Eventually this might lead to the possibility of the acquisition of other, more complex skills, of other, more highly paid work. In just the last two years many of these positions have been eliminated by the introduction of machines to perform those basic tasks. Very soon, for all practical purposes, there will be no entry level positions for unskilled white collar workers in banking. One can see that similar changes will occur in other service industries. (At one time it was thought that the service industries would employ those "freed" by the disappearance of heavy manufacturing and extraction industries, but this is less and less likely.) From one point of view this is a very good thing indeed. Gradually the white collar equivalent of ditch digging will be eliminated. There will be no need to employ hundreds of thousands of people to spend their days in mindless, repetitive tasks. As heavy earth moving equipment has freed men (for the most part) from one type of physical drudgery, so automated bank tellers, that is, the application of computing to the service aspects of information transfer, will free women and men from a type of mental drudgery.

The problem here, for a society like ours, is that those menial white collar jobs were a form of education, a preparation for the slightly more interesting slightly better paid work to be encountered elsewhere in the bank, say. As we will probably not be willing to consider one of those utopian north European solutions (such as that which offered the entire last generation of Belgian coal miners early retirement, without regard to age), we have two alternatives: permanent unemployment for those population groups not educationally equipped to find work in the new economy, or more investment in education. The former choice is much more costly than the latter. It involves extensive construction of prisons, epidemic control, unemployment benefits, welfare payments, higher taxes, higher crime rates, shorter lives. There is not much that need be said about the prospect of condemning a large part of the population to marginalization, except, perhaps, to comment on the word itself. What sort of margin is it that contains so much of the human "text" of society? We are talking about a margin only in the sense that these are people at the margins of the attention of those who plan society.

One significant problem which Olga told me about is that of the disincentives from education for traditionally educationally disadvantaged groups. There are already many educational institutions available for those interested in basic education. There are, for instance, high schools, both regular and adult, continuation and trade. There are community colleges. If Rex Johnson or Nguyen duc Tuan wishes to improve his employment opportunities by learning to read and write in English, or by improving those skills from fourth-grade level to a point where they are useful in the emerging information society, all that Johnson or Nguyen need do is enroll in a free or nearly free course. That is all, but, as with elementary education, in some cases it is too much.

Let us think about Johnson for a minute. He was born in Los Angeles nearly twenty years ago. He is black. He grew up in an extended household composed of his mohter, grandmother, and a number of brothers, sisters, half-brothers, cousins (You have heard this story before.) No one he knows has a college degree. There are virtually no books in his house, virtually no reading materials of any kine. None of his friends has a job that requires anything more than fourth grade literacy skills (of course, not many people he knows have jobs at all). In fourth grade he missed his week or two of school (a younger sister was ill and had to be looked after, his mother was beat up by the man who had been living with them, there was a gang war in the neighborhood and it was unsafe to go to school). That left him a bit behind on his reading and writing skills, so he was bored for the rest of the year, not understanding the lessons. The teacher tried to help, but there were those thirty-eight other children in the class, many of whom were more in need of personal attention than Rex. Rex never learned much more in school, attended irregularly, became more and more involved with gangs, or simply began drinking and taking drugs. One of his stepfathers had him sent to jail as an incorrigible ("It will do him good"), where he was raped. After jail it was hard for him to get jobs, with no skills and a jail record and the habit of not showing up places when he felt like doing something else. How likely is it that Rex, at nineteen, will suddently decide to go to night school? And if he goes, what is it that he will want to be taught? He already knows how to read and write--ask him.

Olga says that people like Rex live in a world that is at once magical and violent. The violence is real. They get shot or stabbed as frequently as middle-class people get in automobile accidents. Some of them do the shooting and stabbing, as some of us, perhaps, are at fault in automobile accidents. Women in Rex's world get beat up frequently, get pregnant and abandoned, have trouble holding jobs or finishing school. The view that Rex and his friends have of the world that they do not live in, the world they see on television and in the movies, is magical in a pernicious way. In that magical world things are not connected. One day you are a typical high-school student, the next you have a contract from a professional football team. There is a link between this television magic and street violence, a link that makes the magic in a sense believable. It is that in Rex's everyday world the transitions are television sudden, if always negative. One day you are a typical high-school student, the next you are dead. Rex and his friends live in a domestic Third World, one which appears to have been designed by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, but has actually been designed by those of us who work in the consciousness industries. If life itself is actually so precarious, it is not unreasonable to believe that positive changes also (if they can occur) will be characterized by sudden and inexplicable transformations. If Rex goes to night school, it is more likely that he will wish to study "computers" than reading. Computers are magic. The problem for those who would intervene in this world, benevolently, is to remove the magic, and not just from computers, to reveal the causal links between events. This must be done before any technical education can be accomplished (and I am counting literacy here as a technique, although not invidiously, as I have elsewhere). General knowledge, Olga told us, must precede literacy. If it does not, the acquisition of literacy literally makes no sense. Why read if you believe that it is sheer chance which will either kill you or make you rich?

I think that the very relentlessness of the negatively magical vision of everyday life which possesses Rex and his friends might serve to justify some intervention in the process by which they make their choices. If they are frequently told by television and motion pictures that success in life happens by means of a gun or through a gratuitous gesture by benevolent millionaire or through the recognition of physical characteristics (not achievements), and they are told by their own senses that failure occurs also without their willing it, by means of random gunfire, arrests, drug impurities, then it is probably not improper for them also to be informed that there are other alternatives. That in return for relinquishing the magical explanation of success (or surgvival), they may find some possibility of survival (or success) through the decidedly non-magical means of education. They have been forgotten by our society, a process of forgetting which is a mode of exclusion. If they are to re-enter that society--and not be parasites on it--they must learn that it exists; it must be made non-magical, real.

This is the purpose of the literacy preparation program that Olga had devised for the CCC. It consisted of two areas of eduation: she (and her friends) told Rex (and his friends) about that society which is not Hollywood and not Watts. How the water system works. How the stock market works. Exactly, really, not magically, how one becomes an Olympic or professional athlete. How these matters are connected. And then she had Rex and his friends take an inventory of their own skills, where they can fit into these systems. She asked: "Would you like to be an athlete? What diet do you follow?" And then she taught them about nutrition. They seem not to have heard about it before, or about simple anatomy, or about the complexities of reproduction. Olga says that "They know nothing about the human body under its skin." This is fairly worrisome, as some already had children, many of whom were born to undernourished mothers (living on widely advertised processed foods: Hostess Ding Dongs for breakfast). Gradually they learned from Olga that only part of the world is magical, caught between random violence and fantasy; that the part of the world (our world) that is the source of theirs is not magical at all; there, everything is connected, and, from the point of view of the individual, all these connections begin with literacy.

Olga's approach to the problem of adult illiteracy and semi-literacy showed me that I had been looking in the wrong place for solutions to these problems. I had thought that it was a technical problem, that I would find some procedure that would be applicable. It is not only a procedural problem. Literacy is not a felt need in a magical world. Before we as teachers could apply to them as students the procedures of our professional expertise, they had to become students, and accept us as teachers. This will not work. A different approach is needed. The first step is the de-mystification of the world. The second is our willingness to give up the protection of our roles as teachers, to remember each of them as individuals, to agree that our relationships are personal. When I had failed to re-balance the groups, I had learned that in this situation, at the limit of education, teachers are only allowed to be teachers if they are Doug and Betty and the students are Rex and Tran. Relationships between individuals must replace relationships between roles. With such relationships in place, the Corpsmembers were learning basic literacy skills, often quite repidly. Irene reported that after three class sessions her illiterate student had progressed from his name and "the" to all three letter words with the vowels "i," "e," and "a." The "Internationals" were talking among themselves in English, which they had denied knowing at the beginning of the course. Enrique Valasquez, a recent emigrant from Mexico, had become something of a cross between an ethnographer and a native informant, giving me weekly written reports on the progress of the Corpsmembers. Some of the black Corpsmembers were pointing out black dialect features in their writing and asking their instructors how standard English differs. Literacy among unschooled young adults is not entirely a technical problem. It is also, one might say, a motivational problem. One might say that, as one might say that the Civil War was a policy disagreement. They must acquire the motivation to live. Then they can be taught to write better, to read.

We did learn some technical-pedagogical things. About half way through the experimental summer program, Doug Cazort started having his students tape-record narratives, then write them down from their own recorded "dictation." I thought this was fairly strange at first; our usual procedure with freshmen had been to have them record essays they had already written. Doug explained to me that this reversal was a solution to another problem that we had been worrying about: most of the Corpsmembers, when asked to write an essay, would write perhaps three words and erase two. It is difficult to finish a composition with this technique. They were apparently operating in accordance with a theory that "correctness" and the avoidance of error is the primary aim of writing. Expression and communication were reserved for speech. We had begun by simply telling them that this is not a correct theory, that Derrida, for instance, would point out that it is a typical instance of logocentricism in Western culture, but this had not made much of an impression. Doug (following Steve Krashen's theoretical lead in this) had found a way to smuggle expression and communication, and thus interest, into writing. The Corpsmembers liked to use the tape recorders, liked to *tell* stories, and did not view the inscription of their own dictation as "writing," in the negatively charged sense that the word had for them. Soon people who had difficulty filling half a page with direct composition were filling two or three pages in an hour class session from their own dictation. Fortunately we had readily available a tape laboratory normally used for foreign language instruction. Many of our students began living there during their hours with us. The more advanced, more verbal students were particularly attracted to, and helped by, this device.

After a few weeks of our summer job, working with the CCC personnel on what was often, and necessarily, a mutual education project (I now know a bit too much about the phenomenology of prison culture), Bruce Saito asked us to continue literacy education for his Corpsmembers during the academic year. I asked if the Corpsmembers themselves wanted this. They did.

I felt that we had already accomplished something more than a one-shot effort at improving literacy skills for a random group of educationally handicapped young adults. The observation about the rapidity of small group bonding could be attributed to the origins of the disability itself and to a method for overcoming that disability. These poorly education young people were poorly educated not by chance, but because they had been forgotten by the educational system. Their literacy could be improved if they were remembered, if particular educators cared about them. I believe that here, as with so many matters, psychological and sociological phenomena form a continuum. If Freire was successful in teaching peasants to read and write by presenting the achievement of literacy in a political context, he did so by persuading them that literacy is one component of a task involving the transformation of their lives as individuals and as invididual representatives of a class. Literacy, in the Third World, can become the locus of hope itself. It is highly unlikely that this particular contextualization of literacy can be widely applied in the United States. (There are exceptions--farm workers, for instance.) The relevant application of Freire's technique is to show individuals that their personal welfare can be enhanced by improvements in their literacy. Since this is a personal matter, direct personal involvement is crucial. The pedagogical instantiation of this theory is that of small group tutorials, not classes, and a degree of stability in instructor/student relations. The connection with the CCC gave us a stable student population, and we had learned to emphasize the stability of our instructor/student groups.

The use of tape recordings of verbal texts by the students themselves as the basis for composition is not novel, nor is it an answer in itself to the technical questions of adult semi-literacy. It is, though, a demonstration of the richness of the teaching environment as the source for technical and theoretical innovation. In our ESL group Judith was able to achieve significant results by helping her students express that which they wished to express--not, "This is a table" but, "The CCC makes us work hard." Why learn to say, to write, words which do not matter? As Steve Krashen told me at least once a week, only university students will put up with the material in most traditional textbooks. Working with young adults who were certainly living in the real world and who, we learned quickly enough, intensely desired to improve their literacy skills, we spent little time with technques that satisfied us, but not them. We asked the students to help us design the "curriculum"; we asked them to evaluate the Program. We might as well have asked; if we did not, they told us anyway. It happened to matter to them whether they acquired more survival opportunities.

A student-teacher ratio of six or eight to one is fairly expensive. However, the context is that of welfare payments of four or five thousand dollars a month for a group that size if they are unemployable because of deficient literacy skills. I believe that is a fairly good cost/benefit ratio, if one wants to talk about cost/benefit ratios. I do not. It is a mark of barbarism when a society treats people as if they were things. Things may be forgotten. People must be remembered.

The "ME" Series

Workplace Literacy is, in a way, a misleading slogan, as all too often it is taken to refer to literacy restricted to on the job utility. We tried to keep in mind throughout the project that if literacy is a survival skill, it is also something that makes survival worthwhile. The "ME" series of lectures and discussions was brought to the project by Olga Connolly, and formed an integral part of it during the first summer and during the two on-campus phases. Later, at Klammath, a form of it became virtually the entire pedagogical method.

The "ME" Series

by Olga Connolly

The "ME" Series

A corpsmember once explained to her partner these weekly seminars which tied together areas of liberal arts, humanities and sciences. "I understand that Olga wants me to know that the whole universal environment and what goes on in it somehow relates to me," she said. Her succinct description produced the informal title "ME" Series. The seminars on topics designed to expand the corpsmembers' horizons in knowledge and synergistic reasoning are indispensable to the development of functional literacy. Environmental, scientific, anthropological and cultural understandings must be present in an individual if he or she is to really utilize the alphabetical tools of literacy. Without such understandings, even career exploration programs become little more than vacuous exercises, which fail to ameliorate the young person's alienation from the society or their sense of lostness.

In my work with the corpsmembers I rediscovered what I have been confronted with throughout the years of guidance among the inner-city (and suburban) youth everywhere. They had rehearsed long vocabularies of words and did not know what those words expressed. They had little notion about themselves, how they fit into our society, and about life in general. Corpsmembers were fired for "poor attitude" and neither those who were fired nor those who were left were able to explain the word "attitude." At times, I would bring to the young people lists of questions from career exploration and other texts. Their answers would be sketchy, reflecting insecurity and misunderstanding of the realities on which the questions were based. Generally, such answers are being used to accuse the youth of being shallow thinkers, being unable to express themselves, being disinterested and stupid. In actuality, the heavy majority are none of the above; they are misguidedly expected by the adult society somehow magically to know. And they get punished for not knowing what they have not been taught.

The corpsmembers who had not the slightest idea about the functions of their bodies or brains could not possibly understand or strive to develop their potential to learn. Having no understanding and admiration of the artistry and precision, marvelous functionality of a human being, they could not be expected to be keen on self-preservation and preservation of others from drug abuse, for example. Could the term "space age" have any meaning for them if they had no idea that the Earth is a part of a specific planetary system which rotates around the sun; or what the consequences are of the Earth's rotation around its own axis? Similarly, having no historical understanding of democracy, how could they be expected to register and vote; and even if some charismatic individual or cause persuaded them to do so, to vote in an objective, responsible fashion? Reading and writing are communication tools for expressing and exchanging mental images, variations on these, and comments and suggestions about them. When one's intellect has mastered only a limited range of experience and understandings, and hardly any diversity of images, exchange of ideas with the outside world will become quickly self-limiting. The tools of communication cannot be used with any sophistication.

The socially frustrating economic dependency of the chronically poor and illiterate in our society may well contain a causative factor of cultural illiteracy. Human existence and strivings within the planetary and universal environment have not been demystified for them. They, themselves, bought into the belief that in their efforts to get ahead they should limit themselves to acquiring knowledge of certain superficial political processes and fundamentally narrow, "marketable employment skills." In my opinion, this walling off of a broader intellectual comprehension and creative or scientific thought--anything which displays no blatantly utilitarian connections--promote only dysfunctional literacy. Thus it propagates functional illiteracy. One of its symptoms has become a nightmare for employers across the nation who complain that their entry-level employees seem to have no common sense, are unable to perform a variation of a task which was rehearsed in only one way, and lack the mixture of inquisitiveness and ethusiasm which makes people trainable for promotion.

The "ME" Series, therefore, attempted to put some bones and meat on the ghosts of abstract symbols--be it letters, words or sentences. Severe time limitations allowed us to expose the young men and women only to sketches of large areas of knowledge. However, we selected the guest instructors with great care; and on the average, spent at least an hour explaining the responsibility within their presentations. Thus, the presentors walked in concentrated and well prepared, utilizing their thorough knowledge of a subject towards depicting its totality and ramifications, as well as the specifics and profundities of their own work in the area. Often, they opened a vista hitherto unknown to the corpsmembers; they became its representatives, impressive but reachable role models.

Here is the schedule of "ME" Series events:

Los Angeles Urban Center "ME" Series

1 July 1983-30 April 1984

During the year, every Monday which was not lost to a holiday or corpsmembers involvement with some emergency work, we met from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. for the "ME" Series either at U.S.C. or at the L.A. Center of the C.C.C. Guest lecturers and our staff examined the following topics:

Why Literacy? - Initial exploration of different aspects of the word; its personal, professional and social benefits.

Preparation for Employment - Explanation of the advantages a more literate person can have in deciding on areas of personal interests and aptitudes and the steps available for their development.

Building and Complex the Ramifications of a Simple Stop Sign - Understanding of one's own needs and interests among those of the society; accepting responsibility of one's action; the obvious and hidden teamwork of everyday living.

Human Functionality and Versatility - a prominent surgeon's explanation of the structure and functionality of human body, with a special emphasis on the hand and the brain.

Robots and Computers - What do we mean by the term "technology? The principles, potentials, hopes and threats coming from these extensions of human dexterity and intellect.

Graphs and Related Illustrations - Introduction of abstract symbols other than the alphabet; some of their meanings;

transcript of human voice into vibrations registered on the oscilloscope.

Problem Solving and Decision Making Methods

The Democratic Process - Where laws come from; why and how new laws may need to be created or changed? The democratic political system and the rights and responsibilities of an individual within it.

Proper Nutritional Habits as the Cornerstone of Preventive Health Care.

The Roles and Psychology of Advertising - understanding of relevant information versus misleading facts.

TV and the Movies - how do they affect us? How to sort out fiction from reality? The options a reader of a book has as compared to the options in watching the electronic media.

Why to Read and Cooperate with the Daily Newspaper - How is the newspaper put together? Who selects the stories? What is the role of a newspaper in a democratic society?

Consumer Education - several Mondays were spent on issues selected by the corpsmembers. These ranged from housing through clothing; basic banking; child care and child payments; grievance procedures; shopping for automobiles and appliances; to how to look for a job.

Introduction to Astronomy - explanation of the vastness of the known Universe and its galaxies; photos and laboratory demonstrations of objects in the sky--for example, how cold it gets there at night--the unique and fragile environment of our finite planet Earth - this seemingly esoteric topic helped to position the earth and the earthlings -- and, just as all the other topics listed before and those following, opened a whole cornucopia of career options which, when summed up at the end of the presentations, became less abstract and more worth considering.

The Oceans and Antarctica - slides and personal sharing of a scientist showed that the oceans are marvelously equipped, live and busy worlds; explained to the corpsmembers numerous environmental connections between the land and the sea. He specifically introduced the krill, a rather unsightly tiny creature, as a possible part of salvation of mankind from hunger. There was a great deal of food for thought in the discussion of why humans seek adventure, work hard for little money or prestige, why they pursue some higher values than those simplistic ones which surround us.

Why Man Creates - a film and critical discussion has dealth with great many principles of human existence and creativity; its productive and counter-productive aspects.

Video and Film Making - viewing of various film strips and a discussion with artists about what they tried to produce or convey was another opportunity for the corpsmembers to expand their minds.

In order to experience the difficulty of creative work which searches excellence, the corpsmembers were given a chance to produce a videotape.

In still another variation on the "ME" Series, we visited the Olympic pool at U.S.C. Besides encouraging the corpsmembers to take a dip, we discussed how it was built and what were the contributions of the many franchises within the MacDonald Corporation; what franchises mean; the engineering involved in building and maintaining such a pool; its use every day and during the Olympics; the strivings of someone who wants to be the best in swimming or anything else. The pool stopped being a prop to the corpsmembers. Instead, it became a product of a complex human endeavor and a multi-faceted opportunity for learning about human relations, their dreams and a whole variety of job options. Similarly, at another day, we spent two hours at the Los Angeles Coliseum. Again, the corpsmembers left with understandings which surpassed the obvious; and therefore, they left more literate.

Reading Exposure and the Development of Literacy

On one side we had Irene Clark's Writing Center, filled with corpsmembers and disoriented instructor-researchers. On the other we had the literacy seminar, led by Steve Krashen, where we could sit back and talk things through. Often we were unsure how to interpret what we saw happening in the Writing Center. What were the corpsmembers doing as we worked with them on literacy? We found that we needed theories before we could even find "facts." Most of our discussions began with Krashen's concept of the affective filter, which looked like the only explanatory theory around. The next essays first saw the light as a paper in the seminar.

Steve Krashen is author of *Principles and Practices of Second Language Acquisition*, *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*, and most recently, *Writing: Research, Theory, and Applications*.

Hooked on Books in the CCC

But how do you give people the opportunity to read? We know, most lately from Shirely Brice Heath's Ways With Words, that alphabetical literacy is not enough, that knowing how to read is useless if reading is not done. Betty Bamberg suggested that we apply the "Hooked on Books" approach. We did. It worked. Literacy is environmental. People do not read if there are no books in their environment. We flooded the C.C.C. with books.

Betty Bamberg is Director of the Freshman Writing Program at U.S.C. She has published widely in such journals as Research in the Teaching of English and College Composition and Communication.

Hooked on Books in the CCC

by Betty Bamberg

Hooked on Books in the CCC

Most literacy programs concentrate on teaching reading rather than writing. Although the Model Literacy Program deliberately reversed this emphasis, we recognized the importance of reading, both as an essential literacy skill and as a means of developing writing skills. Soon after beginning our writing workshops, instructors began to assess corpsmembers' reading skills and attitudes toward reading and to look for ways of incorporating reading into the Model Literacy Program.

Almost all of the corpsmembers were functionally literate in the usual sense of the word - able to read at a fifth grade level. Only three of more than sixty were true alphabetic illiterates - unable to decode print other than their own names - and they were put into a special group where they could receive the individualized instruction in basic reading that they needed (See "Special Cases" and "Tutoring Alphabetic Illiterates"). Although the remainder of the corpsembers were able to read, they were essentially nonreaders: little reading was expected in the workplace, and reading was not an activity in their lives outside the CCC.

Corpsmembers soon found that reading was part of their writing instruction. Some instructors used sections of books, plays, newspaper articles, or essays to begin language activities that would lead to informal oral and written responses or compositions. In all groups, corpsmembers read their own writing as well as that of others. Sometimes they read aloud, sometimes silently; usually they read to receive or give a response to a piece of writing that was either in-progress or finished. As the year continued, reading and writing became more closely integrated; corpsmembers moved back and forth between the two modes of discourse and saw them as part of the process of communicating rather than as separate activities.

However, we wanted to find a way to increase the amount of reading by corpsmembers and to turn them from nonreaders into active readers in the workplace and at home. If we could find a way to make books available and encourage the corpsmembers to read them, we were confident they would discover the pleasures of reading and derive the substantial benefit that can result from regular reading. Books offered them knowledge that would enable them to move beyond their magical view of the world and give them a greater sense of mastery and control over their lives. Moreover, the research on "Reading Exposure" (summarized earlier by Stephen Krashen) indicated that meaningful reading would help improve their "language skills" and increase their overall level of literacy.

In thinking about ways to add a component that would result in a meaningful reading experience, Daniel Fader's successful experiment from the 1960's was the obvious starting point. The program Fader devised - later known as "Hooked on Books" - was developed for a group of delinquent adolescent boys living at a "half-way" house. His program was quite simple: he assembled a large number of paper back books, put them in easily accessible paperback book racks, and enouraged the boys to read whichever ones interested them. The boys read only for pleasure, not for a class or for an exam. The interest in and enthusiasm for reading generated by this approach exceeded Fader's most optimistic expectations. The boys' self-selected pleasure reading not only improved their reading skills, but changed their attitudes toward books and reading. From reluctant readers who saw little value in books, these adolescents came to see reading as a valuable and interesting activity that could be an important part of their daily lives.

How could we get the CCC corpsmembers hooked on books? We began by asking about the reading they did and what they might like to read. Few reported reading regularly, but almost all responded positively to the idea of a self selected reading program. Following the "Hooked on Books" model, we wanted to appeal to the corpsmembers' varying interests by providing a wide range of titles. After the instructors had informally surveyed the reading interests of corpsmembers, we invited several of the LA Urban CCC Center staff to join us on a book-buying expedition. We bought our books from a large paperback warehouse, and their regular inventory - intended for newstands at supermarkets or drug stores and for book fairs at elementary and secondary schools - offered a wide variety of titles as well as a range of reading levels. The newstand titles included current popular fiction and non-fiction titles that corpsmembers might encounter in stores where they shopped, while the book fair titles included traditional and modern "classics" as well as young adult novels that dramatized adolescent problems or concerns. At the request of corpsmembers, we later bought magazines on sports, fashion, news, current entertainment, popular culture, etc. to round out our collection of reading materials.

Once we had collected the reading materials, we had to find a way to make them easily available and to encourage corpsmembers to read them. Here we had to adapt the "Hooked on Books" model to fit our particular circumstances. LA Urban was a nonresidential center.

Corpsmembers had to report for work by 7 a.m. and left immediately after the 4 p.m. dismissal to catch buses or drive home on the freeways. Although the center had a small "library," it was not centrally located and only those working on credits for their high school diploma would have been able to select books placed there.

We began the reading program during the summer by placing the books in two boxes. These boxes were available to corpsmembers and instructors in the USC Writing Center during class time but could be easily stored once the class was over. Although this approach was fairly successful, we didn't want corpsmembers to see reading as confined to the classroom and began to look for ways to bring reading into the workplace.

At first there appeared to be no time or place during the work day when corpsmembers could select or read books. We began looking for "empty spaces," in the work day, reasoning that corpsmembers would read during those times if interesting books and magazines were available. After talking to the LA Urban staff, we found that corpsmembers had free time to read while riding in the vans that took them to and from their work sites. Also, when work crews finished early, corpsmembers waited in a lounge area in the garage until dismissal time. To turn this dead time into reading time, we bought portable plastic file holders and filled one set of files with an assortment of paperback books and the other with magazines. We placed two boxes - one with books and one with magazines - on each van, thereby enabling corpsmembers to read during their driving time and/or at lunch. The files for each van were a different color for easy identification; however, the files contained different titles, and we encouraged corpsmembers to trade or borrow books or magazines from other vans. In the lounge area, we devised a rotation system to encourage magazine reading. Magazines ordered by subscription went first to the library where they stayed for several days. We then placed the new magazines in the magazine files on the vans and rotated the old magazines from the files to the tables in the lounge area. Corpsmembers could either read the magazines while waiting for the official end of the day or take them home.

Because interesting books or magazines were easily available, corpsmembers engaged in meaningful reading and began to see reading as interesting and pleasurable. They began to look forward to reading, to take books home to share with their family and friends, and to ask for new titles. Our program had succeeded: The CCC was hooked on books.

The Interview as a Strategy for Teaching Literacy Acquisition

The National Writing Project has taught us that teachers know more than they are expected to, that when brought together they will have much to teach one another. Lawrence Tyler-Wayman had much to teach us. His pastoral work and experience with various marginalized social groups had taught him that education begins with self-respect, or, as too many say these days, empowerment. The corpsmembers who were working with him worked as a group, and achieved much. His methods will be applicable in many educational situations. They are described in the following essay.

THE INTERVIEW AS A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING LITERACY ACQUISITION

Lawrence H. Tyler-Wayman

THE INTERVIEW AS A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING LITERACY ACQUISITION

THE INTERVIEW

Literacy is a group activity. It requires the establishment of relationships and interdependencies between people. Experiences, values, ideas, and beliefs cannot be articulated and understood in isolation from contrasting or similar referent experiences, values, ideas, and beliefs. The teaching of literacy requires at least a relationship of one to one. Ideally the relationship is characterized by one learning from many.

In the Model Literacy Project of the University of Southern California the relational requirement in literacy acquisition was put to the test. The Project participants were taught organizational strategies for conducting a group interview and for composing a group essay.[1] One goal of the class was to establish a trust level that was high enough so that the students would be willing to learn from each other. A second goal was to teach the students how to apply insights gained from a group experience to their own individual experience.

The MLP participants were not completely lacking in literacy skills. Many of them had received their high school diplomas, and some had attended trade schools or colleges. They had in common their membership in the California Conservation Corps. They also had in common their skepticism about the value of the MLP for them.

On the first day of class I concentrated on two objectives. One was to convince the students that they would be in charge of their own literacy acquisition program. The second was to assure the students that they would be trained in useful skills that would work for them in a variety of situations in which effective communication would be required. The first objective is similar to the Coro Foundation objective of "self-governance." The second objective is similar to what Coro calls "responsible citizenship."

Many of the students had experienced failure in their past attempts to acquire competency in the use of literacy skills. They were blocked from exercising their ability to improve. In several cases they were blocked from even believing that they could improve. We began with a useful exercise for desensitizing the students to their frustration over failure. It was the familiar parlor game of connecting nine dots arranged in a square in four moves without removing the pencil from the paper or backtracking over the lines.

The solution to the game is to recognize that in order to connect the dots one must be liberated from the restrictions of the square. The discovery that learning is liberty beyond the nine dots served as the foundation for all of the learning that followed. For those students who were caught in a "nine dot existence," the discovery that they could move beyond the box of nine dots was a profound learning.

The discovery of freedom brought with it a challenge for the students. They were faced with the need to acquire new and specific skills in order to take advantage of their new opportunities for growth.

At this point in the process they were ready to be trained for the specific task of group interviewing. Such a learning activity provides a quick way for the students and instructor to begin dealing with a variety of literacy topics in an integrated format directed toward a specific goal. The interview is one activity in which the skills and tools necessary for literacy acquisition can be learned, applied, and evaluated simulatneously.

The class worked as a team. One finds security in numbers, and I wanted the students to learn that their classmates could be trusted to be responsible and supportive in their common task.

As a group the students went to the home territory of the person to be interviewed. Prior to the first interview I taught them strategies in observation or "checking things out," (Figure 1) in order that the students would be able to overcome their sense of strangeness in the new setting. Such training also provided the students with a sense of power and confidence in their ability to understand and deal effectively with unfamiliar situations.

The corpsmembers were instructed to notice details about the building, office, or room. Such details would provide them with information about what the person to be interviewed does, who that person is, and what that person considers to be of value. None of this information was provided to the students prior to the interview.

They learned that taking notes on what they observed was not an activity that was a goal in itself. We did not waste time learning outlining. Through direct application they discovered that their notes could serve as valuable tools. Benefitting from immediate feedback about what their tools could and could not do, the students adapted their use of their skills to meet the demands of their task. As their skills increased they discovered that they were able to assume greater responsibility for directing the interview. For them their new knowledge became power.

After the interview they evaluated their notes in a group setting to determine their usefulness. The students offered suggestions to each other about how the notes could be taken and used more effectively during the next interview session. Following their discussion the students composed a group essay using their notes and discussion in the development of a structure for their collective composition (Figures 2 and 3).

My role as their instructor was to provide the necessary information that one would provide in a regular class session on composition. Because of their interview experience, the students were ready and able to work with the various writing strategies that I suggested to them. The team had matured in its ability to recognize good organization and better organization. The students had developed enough sophistication to be able to discuss and distinguish effective composition styles from ineffective styles. Each one learned from the many, not under duress or external pressure, but within a context of mutual support.

The corpsmembers worked as a team during the interview. Each person had a specific responsibility. One responsibility was for a member of the team to monitor the interview setting and the process to insure that it progressed smoothly. This person's first task was to greet the interviewee, to introduce the members of the group, to explain in a general way what the group intended to do, and to pose the first question or observation.

Direct questions often are not as effective as indirect or follow-up questions. Statements of observation that draw explanatory responses from the interviewee are more useful in bringing to light underlying issues and themes for further discussion. The students are taught to be thoughtful in their questioning style by thinking of several related questions at the same time, by recognizing the line of questioning being pursued by a team member and building on it, and by observing the interviewee's responses to the various questions for clues about further lines of questioning.

Observation is crucial in a group interview. In one interview session a team member noticed that the distinguished person being interviewed was wearing a Mickey Mouse watch. The interviewer asked, "How many children do you have?" The interviewee jumped and asked the questioner how she knew that he had children. "I noticed your watch," she said. He smiled; his eyes twinkled; and he spent ten minutes talking about his children, his grandchildren who had given him the watch as a birthday present, and what he and his wife planned to do when he retired in two weeks. The interview took off from this point. The questioners and the distinguished businessman talked about family, Disneyland, the pressures of the work place, what is important in life, and how one should spend his or her leisure time.

One question that was never asked either at the beginning or at the end of the interview was the question "Why?" It is too easy for an interviewee to respond to such a question with a rationalized or edited answer rather than with an unselfconscious answer. An indirect observation or a question such as "What are the reasons for . . . ?" elicits a more comprehensive and honest response. The person being interviewed is allowed greater latitude in explaining or elaborating on an answer to such a question. Because of its less threatening nature, such an indirect question lessens the chance of the interviewers being perceived as adversaries.

At no point did the interviewing team lose control of the interview. Since the questioners worked as a team, the person being interviewed was kept off balance. His initial sonorous responses reflecting his power and position did not overwhelm the students. They recognized their safety in their group. They maintained a courteous and nonjudgmental style in their responses. They were successful in establishing a non-threatening setting. The interviewee was put at ease, and he was made to feel comfortable in his responses to even the most pointed or personal questions. Significant communication occurred, and the students were in charge.

The interview is organized on three levels of questioning. The levels are ordered according to their depth of significance and threat. The first interview level includes questions about what the person does. This is the least threatening level, and it provides all parties involved the opportunity to talk about seemingly important issues without being too intrusive. The second interview level includes questions about who a person is. The potential for discomfort increases at this level. The team needs to exercise careful observation skills to determine how far the questions can be pressed before resistance sets in. If everyone is doing his or her job the trust level should be high enough so that the person being interviewed will find pleasure in talking autobiographically rather than fear or discomfort. The third interview level includes questions about what the person believes to be of greatest value.

This third level is the most difficult, significant, and exciting. It is at this level that "real" communication takes place. The questions are addressed to four general categories of experience in a person's life: politics, religion, education, and leisure. They are questions focusing on issues of value, belief, and meaning. The interviewing team disciplines itself to the following of this order of significance. The team is organized according to this order.

Members of the team volunteer to ask questions on one of the three levels. After the initial introduction a level one question or observation is made. The level one team is in charge of the first part of the interview. Fifteen minutes is the maximum time spent at this level. Members of the other two teams are making careful notes of the respones, listening, looking, and feeling for issues that will determine the direction of their questions when the interview proceeds to level two and level three.

Each team has a coordinator who indirectly moves the questioning along, changes its direction, involves all members of the team in the process, and monitors the quality of responses from the person being interviewed. The instructor does not do this. The instructor says nothing during the interview. The most that the instructor should do is to inconspicuously keep note of the time. The students must be the ones who are in charge of the interview.

When the time is up for one level of questioning, the coordiantor for the questioning on the next level interjects a question or observation. Such an interjection is the signal to the entire team that it is time to move to a new and deeper level. This process is followed until level three is reached. At this point everyone usually joins in. The conversation ranges over many topics having to do with meaning and value on all three levels. The air becomes electric as everyone seeks to ask questions at the same time, even while trying to respect the line of questioning that has been established. The process of critical analysis takes on a tangible quality to one who might be observing the setting from an objective vantage place.

An assumption underlying the interview process is that its structure provides the student with a model for the organization of ideas. The interview strategies become tools for the students to use in building their own structures of understanding about their world. By organizing information according to its significance in the interview structure the students are able to draw connections, establish relationships, determine priorities, and compare various insights.

Words become associated with specific meanings grounded in the rational dynamics of the interview. Figures 2 and 3 show the interview structure to be the basic organization of the essay. It's a simple structure that provides a starting point for beginning students, the majority of whom have had little experience or success in organizing their lives in such a way that their own sense of self survives. This simple structure tantalizes the students with the possibility that they may be able to acquire means for dealing with and perhaps changing their worlds.

The interview can be a basic experience in the teaching of literacy. It has the capacity to provide what might be called "referent" meaning to such abstract concepts as focus, transition, development, consistency, and logical organization. The students have personal experience in the use and adaptation of such terms in their own lives. The organized, structured, and disciplined interview process opens the entire experience of composition to the student. The experience of the student becomes the source for the literacy curriculum to be followed by the teacher.

In addition to providing the literacy students with a model for the organization of their ideas the interview provides the students with an opportunity to be excited about learning. Rarely do students become ecstatic about a class on how to develop skills in organized thinking, intentional communication, and sensitive listening. In an interview setting in which everyone is thinking, communicating, and listening the atmosphere is charged with enthusiasm.

The excitement is not over the interview itself. Literacy is not knowing what an interview is. The excitement is over the obvious benefit that comes when a student is able to experience success in a learning acitivity in which he or she is in charge. The student learns "the system" by means of a "hands on" experience in which the student discovers how a system works and the reasons why each participant in the system acts the way he or she does.

The one learns from the many. The students see that other people have interests and perceptions of the world that are as profound or as simple theirs. The students learn that decisions in a system are not made in isolation from other decisions. They experience the possibility of considering the value of other peoples' views without the diminishing in value of their own views.

The interview as a group activity provides skeptical students with a collection of successes in interdependence. They perceive the connections between various levels of meaning and experience. They actually discover with others what is going on and how they can be responsible for themselves and for others in both the interview situation as well as in other dimenstions of their lives.

No interview conducted by the MLP students was a failure. In every case the person being interviewed responded with a depth of seriousness and openness that is rare when a stranger meets a stranger.

In one setting the students interviewed a University administrator in which the last twenty minutes of the interview was marked by an intense discussion of the nature of discrimination. The administrator, characterized by his grey three-piece suit, his Phi Beta Kappa key, and his PhD in philosophy, and the students, characterized by their brown shirt uniforms, belted tool holders, and mud-spattered shoes, shared stories of discrimination and fear. One spoke from the perspective of a Jewish flier for the Allied forces in World War II, and the others spoke from the perspectives of black young people striving for direction in a hostile environment.

After the interview the administrator asked the students to explain what they had done to him. As they explained the levels and categories of organization he leaned forward in his chair. The four aspects of the level three questions reminded him of some of Aristotle's theories on the nature of human identity. He was correct. Donald Fletcher attributes Aristotle with the theory behind the level three structure.

The administrator also asked the students if they had found the interview technique to be helpful in meeting good looking people when they were out on the town. The students jumped on that question. I was amazed to learn that they had been trying out their new skills in some extracurricular homework. They reported success.

They also reported that some of the people who looked good at first turned out to be boring. The students reported that their new friends didn't seem to have anything to say. They were using their newly-learned critical capacities to make judgments about their relationships and to articulate values. The administrator let them know that he would try some of their techniques himself. He said that a good administrator needs to know when something .pa important is happening, and their suggestions would help him in his job.

On another occasion a person from a funding agency paid a surprise visit to the class. A regional administrator from the California Conservation Corps accompanied her. Rather than have the class perform for the guests, I asked the class if they would like to interview the guests. They agreed, and since the guests were not aware of how competent the students were in their ability to ask questions, they agreed to be interviewed.

In thirty seconds I was able to organize the team. Everyone knew their assignment. They began with the young CCC administrator. They learned that she had begun as a CCC crew member, and that in two years she had worked up through the ranks to her present position. As the interview progressed one could observe the rigid and military-style chain of command of the CCC begin to disolve. The students included the young woman in their team and all of them began to talk about their personal goals, their projects for the future, suggestions about how to make the CCC a better program, and frustrations about the present CCC practices. The administrator and the students cut through the surface layers of their separateness, they identified common concerns, and they consulted with each other about possible solutions. All of this happened in a twenty minute interview.

The foundation representative was next. Her responsibility as an officer of a grant-awarding agency was to evaluate the literacy program and to make recommendations to her board of directors. Within five minutes of controlled conversation she was sharing with the young people her hopes for her baby which she was obviously expecting. The students shared with her their genuine excitement over the approaching birth. They then shared with her their own experiences with their own families. One of the students have recently given birth to a little girl. She and the foundation woman discovered some common visions for their babies.

Nothing was said about funding or project approval in either interview. After the students had explained the interview process to the two women, everyone left for their respective responsibilities.

Most persons who have acquired literacy skills are able to remember positive experiences in which their skill development was reinforced either by the affirmation of significant persons or by their own success in a particular activity. Few of the students of the MLP could think of persons or activities which had provided reinforcement for them in the past. The group interview and the subsequent acitivites in group composition provided the kind of reinforcement and encouragement that was necessary for the MLP students to learn.

The interview as a strategy for teaching literacy provides a means for a student to develop skills in being responsible for oneself and in being sensitive to the interests of others. It provides practice and offers success in the exercise of these skills. Spelling, grammar, reading, and writing are demonstrated and understood to be merely tools for the achievement of one's goals. The forbidding mystique of the technical terms is removed. Literacy becomes identified by the student as a useful subject in which success is achievable.

The interview also demonstrates that literacy skills are acquired in group settings as well as in isolated places. The many teach the one as students grapple with the practical requirements of organizational theory and the writing process. Each student assumes personal responsibility for what happens in the learning setting. Each person becomes responsible to and for the others in the group. The interdependence of such self-governing persons serves as the catalyst and the context for the acquisition of literacy skills.

NOTES

[1] The strategies for interviewing were developed by W. Donald Fletcher. Fletcher is the co-founder of the Coro Foundation, a national fellowship and training program offering internships in private and public institutions to persons interested in public affairs. He is the founder and present director of the Liason Citizen Training Program of Los Angeles. The program uses the interview methods of Coro to train urban young people in Los Angeles, in self-governance. It involves them in interview situations, and it sets them to the task to learn what it is that brings meaning and value to those with whom they talk. Fletcher's strategies for self-governance and citizenship training have value in the teaching of literacy acquisition.

Figure 1

Student Handout

CHECKING THINGS OUT

1. Clothing--formal or informal, new or old, uniform or not, revealing or hiding
2. Jewelry--look for unusual or identifying pieces like a school ring or pin, necklace medalion, belt buckle, or watch
3. Physical Appearance--age, weary or alert, outdoors or indoors, good shape or flabby
4. Body Talk--relaxed or on edge, nervous, watch hands, eyes, mouth
5. Attitude--warm or cold, excited or bored, helpful or hiding
6. Room Layout--pictures on wall, how many chairs, items on the desk,trophies, awards, books
7. Room Decor--simple or fancy, new or old, working or decoration, bright colors or dark colors
8. Office Layout--location of secretary's desk, who goes for coffee, placement of desk (a barrier or off to the side)

Figure 2

WHO IS OLGA?

(Reporters: Rolando Golfo, Ricky Raiford, Phillipa Mitchell)

Her name is Olga Connolly. She works with the California Conservation Corps by helping the corpsmembers improve their writing through the Freshman Writing Program at USC.

She is the one responsible for getting the instructors, training these instructors, and in looking for money for this program. She handles all the problems in the program.

Her job is not easy. She needs a lot of energy. She tries to stay in shape.

Olga is a person from Czechoslovakia and a nice person indeed. She came to the United States in 1956, I believe. Olga is a woman with four children, the youngest is 17 years of age. Olga is very proud to be a mother.

She has fun working and teaching with other people. Giving them more education, grammar and English, so when you leave the California Conservation Corps you can go out into the world with a better attitude and know how to fill out job applications correctly.

Olga has hobbies. She loves a good game of basketball and working with others. She has a lot of friends and no enemies. That's good, because I know just by talking to her she's a very nice person.

I'm glad that you are in the United States, I'm glad to have you as a friend.

Olga believes in faith; that's her religion. I guess everyone has their own beliefs.

Belief carries on through a person's mind during everyday activities. Believing in a better tomorrow strengthens the faith of an everlasting life. Olga Connolly's belief is to help a person succeed in life. She is concerned with helping a discouraged mind to learn that it can reach multiple heights.

Her help with the California Conservation Corps, L.A. Urban Center, is deeply appreciated, because everyone can see the dedication she puts forth towards her job. That is what keeps the program jumping.

The involvment she has now is the only one she has at the Urban Center, but she is trying to take the program on to farther centers. Her feelings help others receive this same courage that each member of the L.A. Center has now.

My deep admiration about her is that she does not make politics with her job. Her job is herself. Her faith that this program will be successful is also another part of who she is. The program is an exciting part of her life.

So far she can see improvement, and she is very glad.

Figure 3

STEVE MILLER IS...

(Reporters: Toni Miani, Jay Wagner, David Wayne, David Zeiner)

A man with a video camera has been seen wandering around the San Pedro Center. He is making a video tape for the L.A. Urban Satellite. He is from USC, and several CCC members interviewed him last Friday. The following essay about the man behind the camera was written by the C's members.

Steve Miller is interested in making movies. He is a student in cinematography at USC, and he is a technician in the audio visual room at USC. He's a busy man, and he also enjoys what he does.

Steve is twenty nine years young, and he is from Virginia. He is black and single. He has a good head on his shoulders. Before coming to USC, he attended Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Steve believes education is important. He strongly believes that education is the most important thing in life.

During his leisure time he likes to read, listen to music, and in order to stay in shape he runs and plays tennis. He enjoys going to movies and eating in fine restaurants.

He usually sees about two movies a week to do his own evaluation and to decide what kind of movies he likes.

Steve would like to make a movie that is real, honest and authentic. He would like to a make a movie about racism, and how it affects people, their jobs and their property. Steve believes strongly that all people are created equal no matter what the color of their skin is.

Steve wants to get into the business end of producing movies. Being as knowledgeable as he is, he will succeed.

Literacy as a Catalyst to Second Language Acquisition

Judith Rodby is a sociolinguist specializing in second language acquisition. She was composition coordinator at the Institute for Intercultural Learning in Seattle, Washington with responsibility for literacy programs for ludo-chinese refugees. She is currently coordinator of Special Literacy Programs for the C.C.C. Her book, *Writing By Choice* is forthcoming from Prentice Hall. Key portions of the strategy described in the following essay have since been widely applied nationally in literacy programs for adults, both for native speakers and for students in ESL classes.

Literacy as a Catalyst to Second Language Acquisition

Judith Rodby

Literacy as a Catalyst to Second Language Acquisition

In the summer of 1983, I met and began working with a group of young adults employed by the California Conservation Corps. This work occurred within the context of what came to be called the University of Southern California Model Literacy Project. The corpsmembers in my instructional group were all non-native speakers of English. These corpsmembers from Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Mexico had all worked for the CCC for at least eight months, and had previously attended English as a Second Language classes, one student for as long as three years. And yet, these corpsmembers, who had all lived in the United States for several years. spoke almost no English.

The corpsmembers' lack of English was predictable; many immigrant adults living in ethnic communities in large urban areas perceive little need or opportunity to use English outside of adult school ESL classes. And often, these classes, filled with as many as 50 students, provide opportunities for community meetings rather than occasions for contact with English. What was striking, however, about the corpsmembers was their persistent silence and their resilient strategies for avoiding communication in English.

During the first few weeks of our classes, I tried every surefire, fool-proof technique I had ever developed for immigrant or refugee beginning English as a Second Language students, but the corpsmembers would seldom respond. When I talked to them, asked them questions or showed them things, pictures of tools or people, for example, more often than not they would stare at me blankly and shake their heads; occasionally one would utter the words "no English." The one exception was a young Chinese man from Vietnam. Compared to the others he was practically a chatterbox; regularly and repeatedly he would hail me, or anyone else around, with phrases such as "long time no see" or "kick back homeboy." His English, in other words, consisted solely of phatic expressions that in the jargon of language acquisition research would be called "prefabricated routines."

The happy ending to this phase of the corpsmembers' silence came when I noticed that even though they resisted speaking, they would struggle to make meaning in English through the printed word. Not only would they attempt to read and write, but they would talk while doing so. For example, at 7:00 am when the corpsmembers assembled in the USC classroom, I would greet them with "Good morning, how are you guys?" or "Jorge, you look sleepy. What did you do last night?" They might nod but they wouldn't answer me. They would sit down, fold their arms on their desks and look at me, as if waiting for something. I didn't know what they expected to happen, but I did get the distinct impression that they didn't want me to ask any more questions.

I decided to try a different approach. When the corpsmembers arrived, I would be reading or writing my questions on the board. I still said "Good morning, how are you?," but then I was silent. In a group the corpsmembers would hover around the board, pointing at and pronouncing the words. They might read the questions several times. Eventually, they would request my participation by saying "teacher" or "hey, Judith." "Yes" I would answer and then Jorge or Va would read aloud "How are you?", follow the reading with a smile, and answer "Ok, work easy day. Pass out leaflets," or "Bad day, no good, dirty boots, supervisor dock me."

In other words, somehow reading and writing were catalytic to the corpsmembers' willingness to engage with English, or to engage with me through English. The question addressed in this paper is why. Underlying this issue are the following related questions: first, what were the salient aspects of the literacy events, those things that involve the corpsmembers in making meaning in English? And second, why had the corpsmembers acquired so little English in spite of their exposure in the workplace?

I pause here to clarify a point of terminology; throughout this discussion I use the word acquisition to refer to the corpsmembers' use of English rather than their hypothetical competence in English. Because the corpsmembers refused to perform in English, that is do anything with it, I could not obtain any data through which to speculate about their idealized "competence." In any case, the corpsmembers' competence is irrelevant for this study which focuses on their language use.

My first question then becomes how and why did reading and writing allow the corpsmembers to abandon the avoidance strategies they had developed for English speech? Or, to put the matter in other terms, why were the corpsmembers more inclined to engage with English through reading and writing?

Obviously, all literacy events are comprised of more than an individual in a vacuum with the printed word. Print was important to the corpsmembers' language development but only in conjunction with an environment rich in language functions and an instructor in the role of aide. And only by looking at environment, print and instructor in relationship to each other can we determine why and how literacy events were catalytic to the corpsmembers' development in English.

We worked in large classrooms, with several groups of corpsmembers and instructors in each. My group sat next to the blackboard. I usually arrived before the corpsmembers and covered the board with words and questions about the CCC, their lives in the US, or in their native countries. Often I addressed these board messages to individuals - for example, "Dear Tam, What _is_ a McCloud? Everyday I hear the corpsmembers talking about McClouds, so I've been wondering what they are. What do you do with them? Are they alive? Are they dangerous? Let me know, OK? Judith."

These messages and words were not the stimuli for formal, structured language lessons; they were requests for information and as a result the syntax and lexicon of my messages were not selected for low-level ESL students. Undoubtedly Tam did not know the word _dangerous_, but he learned it because he wanted to answer my message.

The table next to the blackboard was covered with writing materials, pens and paper, folders and notebooks, butcher paper and magic markers, and print, newspapers, magazines, and books, some in English, some in Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish. Some of the books were real, stories, poems, comics, or essays, and some were fake such as the ESL readers which I had altered. For example, I took _No Hot Water Tonight_, a low-level ESL reader about life in an inner city, and cut and pasted it so as to preserve the story but eliminate all of the vocabulary lists and grammar exercises. One of the corpsmembers used it as a model to write a story about his car. He called his masterpiece _No Car Start Tonight._ In sum, the environment was structured so that it was rich with many different functions or uses of language.

As stated above, print was usually the starting point if not the focus for the corpsmembers' interactions with me and each other in English. The reason why print specifically made it easier for the corpsmembers to attempt new strategies for communicating in English is perhaps obvious. In the words of one of the corpsmembers, "print stands still." It is, in the words of W. Ross Winterowd, "an array in space" while "speech is an array in time." As an array in space, it can be contemplated at a reader's own pace, with her own design. For the corpsmembers, speech, in its rapid comings and goings, had come to be interpreted as a command or a noise. And, because the corpsmembers could revise their written texts, they could do what they wanted with written English more fully than with speech. The corpsmembers were, by the way, natural revisors, moving, adding, deleting phases, sentences, words with great dexterity. They seemed to understand writing, or perhaps all language use, as a process of trial and error aimed at taming an unruly beast. This inclination for revision was not, however, accompanied by an obsession with correctness. None of the non-native speaking corpsmembers had high school diplomas, and perhaps because of their lack of formal education, they had not acquired a taste for error hunting.

In their efforts to express themselves in English, the corpsmembers had developed strategies which took advantage of the material quality of print. For example, when defeated in their struggle to find words, they would leave a space on the paper, write a word in their native language or scribble a mark for the thought they wanted to convey. This practice has been called "place-holding" by Jerome Harste and his co-workers who have noticed it in very young children's attempts to write before they are considered by most to be literate.

Also, in our group, we often read aloud. I read to them and they read to me. But when the corpsmembers were asked to read aloud, they generally interpreted the request differently than you or I would: they interpreted it as -- tell what the story is about rather than vocalize the words on the page. Consequently, the corpsmembers would deviate frequently from the words on the page, those that they couldn't pronounce easily or those that they didn't understand. They would begin to paraphrase the story or even to make it up entirely, using the printed page as a prompt for the oral story telling. What the corpsmembers' actions indicate is that they were acquiring written and oral language simultaneously, through similar strategies of forming and testing hypotheses, orchestrating these hypotheses with their own intentions to make meaning.

As implied above, my role as teacher was not to provide the corpsmembers with language lessons per se. Instead, it was to help them become involved in their environment: the literacy group, the CCC, and the world beyond. My first job was to create and maintain a classroom full of interesting things to do with print. I never gave the corpsmembers assignments. I would suggest activities to them, but sometimes they acted as though they wanted to sleep, and if they did, I didn't interfere. Occasionally they were really sleepy; many of them had to get up before five to get to work on time. But more often than not the sleep scenario would go like this: Teresa would strut into the room, glare at me and announce loudly "No English." "OK" I would say and she would put her head down on a desk. Some of the others would be collaborating on a story about Chinese New Year. One of them would transcribe on the blackboard and he and the others would argue about names for traditional foods. It would be noisy and eventually Teresa would raise her head off the desk and shout at me "NO WETBACK," meaning I am not a wetback. "I know. What is going on with you?", I would answer. At this point, she may have put her head back down on the desk for the remainder of the hour, or she may have asked the Vietnamese corpsmembers about their story. She probably wouldn't have talked to me or anyone else in the group about what had happened, at least not that day. Maybe a week or two later, she would raise the topic again, and through a combination of writing and talking with me she would work out a story about a grocery store clerk who hadn't understood her English and had called her a wetback. The example of Teresa points out my second task as an instructor - to provide what M.A.K. Halliday has called tracking, a process in which an adult or teacher shares in the language creating with the child or student. Tracking includes helping students find new ways to say things as they discover new reasons to express themselves or understand others. To the basic concept of tracking, the work of Vygotsky adds the perspective that cooperation between a child and an adult or teacher and a student can lead the student to what he could not yet do by himself.

A final story about the corpsmembers will highlight the importance of the entwined roles of environment, print and instructor in the corpsmembers' language development. After working with the corpsmembers for about four months, I suggested that our group start a CCC newspaper. At first the group greeted this suggestion with suspicion. So I said "Why not? You could interview teachers and corpsmembers in other groups." And at this point they looked at me in horror. "No English" was the predictable refrain. But we did start a newspaper, and we began the newspaper with interviews. The strategy we developed was as follows: as a group we would work out in writing the questions they would ask. Some were as simple as --"What is your favorite food?" They would then go from group to group with the questions in hand. On approaching another group, they might announce themselves as abruptly as "interview" or "the newspaper." Then, they might give the native speaking corpsmembers their question and the piece of paper on which to write their answers and names. When non-native speakers returned to the haven of our table, they would pore over the answers, reading them again and again, asking me questions like - What is steak? My explanation of steak would lead to a discussion of why Americans eat so much beef and so little rice or so few tortillas.

Through the newspaper the corpsmembers learned to use print to mediate social interactions. For the non-native speaking corpsmembers, the newspaper provided a context for interactions which these young people had previously been shut out of. In other words, the newspaper promoted their language development not because of the linguistic tasks it required of the corpsmembers but because of the social interactions which it involved them in, interactions which required language.

At this point I will pose my second question --why had the corpsmembers acquired so little English in spite of their constant exposure to English in the CCC? The conditions under which learners do and do not acquire second languages are outlined in linguist Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. A diagram of the model if found on your handout. Although his theory does not directly specify a relationship between the acquisition of speech and the acquisition of literacy, the theory can be used as a heuristic to probe that relationship.

In brief, Krashen's model of second language acquisition states that learners acquire a second language much as a child acquires her first language; in other words, most of the process is non-conscious. According to Krashen, the role and benefits of formal grammar instruction are minimal. They contribute only to the learners knowledge about a language rather than her knowledge of a language. What learners need instead is access to comprehensible input which Krashen characterizes in the following two ways: It is a simple code, such as that found in caretaker speech, varieties of which are called motherese, teacher or foreigner talk, and it is input which is understood; it results from the learner's involvement in "meaningful interaction" with the target language, that is when the learner is concerned not with form but with messages. If the learner is to acquire the language, this comprehensible input still has to pass through the affective filter to become intake and reach the language acquisition device. To paraphrase Krashen, the filter results from a conglomerate of social and psychological factors which produce social distance from and negative attitudes toward a target language or population. In other words, Krashen's model would explain the corpsmembers lack of English acquisition as resulting from either the absence of comprehensible input, or the of a high affective filte: which would not allow the input to reach the language acquisition device. Conversely, the model would suggest that literacy activities enhanced the corpsmembers' acquisition either by lowering the affective filter or providing comprehensible input. Again, the question is how and here the model must be revised slightly in order to stress both the active role of the learner and the social nature of language.

The following revisions to Krashen's model are stimulated by the work of psycholinguist Daniel Slobin who uses the term "filter" to denote the processing strategies that children use to simplify language so that they can understand it. Using Slobin's work, I understand the affective filter and comprehensible input as a single process rather than as two separate aspects of second language acquisition. In other words, what I am suggesting is that we envision the filter not as a mental structure arrived at because of an attitude, but as strategies which language learners either consciously or non-consciously employ in interpreting the second language. Furthermore, I would argue that the way in which the learners typically go about filtering or making input comprehensible is shaped by their perceptions of the purposes of the language events in which they are engaged. In turn, learners form interpretations about their interlocutor's semantic intentions at least partially through their memories of past linguistic interactions in the language. In other words, the learner's predictions about intention help to shape the strategies they bring to the language event. And, of course, affective factors contribute to this process by shaping strategies at every point in the interpretative event.

This reformulation of acquisition theory reveals why the corpsmembers had acquired so little English in their work environment even though they were surrounded by caretaker language. The instructions that their work crew supervisors and co-workers continuously simplified for them were tantamount to the simple code that in Krashen's model is necessary for input to be comprehensible. But as researchers Newmark and Gleitman have pointed out, caretaker speech is marked not only by form, but also by function. Most caretaker speech is, in M.A.K. Halliday's terms, regulatory; its purpose is to control the behavior of others. And, in fact, the corpsmembers worked in a verbal environment limited to few language functions, an environment in which most speech acts were commands. Often they did not have to engage with the language at all in order to comprehend the message; they had merely to stand still, and watch, using non-linguistic cues to interpret the order. They had learned that they had to access only minimal linguistic information to make an utterance comprehensible. In other words, these filtering strategies, or in Krashen's terms the corpsmembers' high filters, were governed both by the corpsmembers' predictions that all utterances directed at them would be commands and by their own motivations to figure out as quickly as possible what they were supposed to do.

In sum my argument is: language acquisition requires the learners' active and prolonged engagement with the language in the process of making meaning. The corpsmembers had developed interpretive strategies which ensured efficacious interaction in their work environment, but these strategies prohibited their development in English because they consistently minimalized engagement with English. In effect, the corpsmembers methods of dealing with English insured their survival in the workplace and their failure in language acquisition. The setting of the literacy group and the roles and expectations of its participants differed significantly from those of the workplace, the community and probably the traditional ESL class. These differences allowed the non-native speaking corpsmembers to develop the motivation to interact with other participants not with silence but with words. Dialectically, reading and writing facilitated these interactions and language acquisition.

In conclusion, even though the relationship between literacy and second language acquisition has generated little interest in the field of ESL, our assumptions about this relationship are reflected in our models and in our methods. In most ESL classes, reading and writing are delayed until the student has acquired a degree of mastery in oral language skills. This approach to literacy is, at base, a hold over from the views of American structural linguists such as Leonard Bloomfield who in the 1920s wrote that speech is the language and that writing is merely an act of transcribing speech, implying that oral language maps directly onto written language. Developmentally, Bloomfield's ideas suggest that oral language must be in place before the learner can engage in literacy. At its strongest, this assumption dictates that reading or writing be taught not as opportunities for the learner to acquire language, but rather as occasions for the learner to practice or perfect those decoding or encoding skills that are psycholinguistically distinct from and secondary to processes used in oral language.

When writing and reading are introduced in the ESL class, techniques such as controlled composition accompany them. It is no surprise that these methods produce students who envision writing as an act of transcribing correct forms or recording pre-digested truths.

For the corpsmembers, reading and writing became acts not only of learning language but of learning through language.

Finally, the issues raised in this paper are not only a matter of models and methods, they are also a matter of values. The potential of literacy events to create knowledge should be nourished, not only in those who read and write English as a native language, but in all.

1. Stephen Krashen's Model of Second Language Acquisition

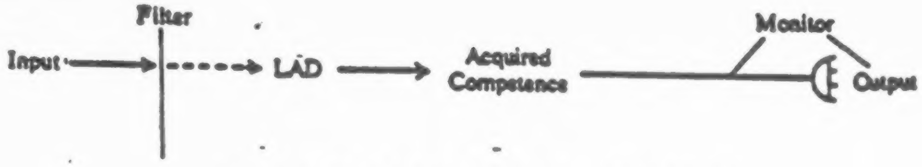

Figure 1: Model A (from Krashen 1982:16, 32)

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Reading Exposure and the Development of Literacy

by Stephen Krashen

Reading Exposure and the Development of Literacy

I am pleased to announce a major new educational breakthrough. It is a simple, inexpensive device, and it will revolutionalize the teaching of language arts. Students of all ages can use it, it is portable, and it is so pleasant to use that students, once they start using it, are often reluctant to stop. Moreover, according to many, many research studies, as well as the personal experience of many people, its use virtually guarantees mastery of many literacy "skills". Those who use it enough become better readers, improve their grammar and vocabulary, develop better writing style, and, I suspect, improve their spelling. It is even better than the Apple IIe. It is the book. When correctly used, the book is our most powerful weapon in language arts and literacy programs.

Correct use of the book is the simplest use: self-motivated and self-selected pleasure reading, reading for genuine interest. Reading without a required book report. No words to look up, no questions at the end of each chapter. In my view, research clearly shows that "Reading Exposure", or meaningful reading experience, at a minimum, improves reading comprehension ability and improves the so-called "language skills", such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and writing style. It may do much more: it may be the only way these abilities are developed. In conjunction with another inexpensive device, writing for meaning, Reading Exposure may be the major means of developing literacy.

The Power of Reading

I recently reviewed the research literature pertaining to various kinds of pleasure reading (Krashen, 1985a). Here is a brief summary of this extensive literature:

1. Students who engage in sustained silent reading programs (SSR) show superior gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary development and other language "skills". According to my analysis, the effects of sustained silent reading do not appear right away - programs that last for less than a year do not show dramatic results (but generally are just as effective as "skill-building" programs).

2. Self-selected reading is, in general, more effective than "basal" programs for improving reading comprehension and vocabulary. As is the case with SSR, self-selected reading programs are consistently effective when they last for a sufficient length of time (at least a year).

3. Children who have "reading resources", who live in a print environment and have books and magazines available to them, are better readers. Thorndike (1976) is an especially interesting example of this kind of research. In his survey of reading comprehension in 15 countries, Thorndike found only two factors that predicted reading ability: socio-economic class and the availability of reading resources. What happened in school did not significantly predict reading ability: ". . . we found substantially no variable of school background that could be counted on to be consistently related to reading achievement from country to country. Factors of class size, teacher training, resources of materials and speicalists in the school, and techniques of presentation or instruction were all relatively fruitless as predictors". (p. 506)

4. Several studies show that students who report that they do more pleasure reading tend to score higher in tests of reading

comprehension and have a more mature writing style. In addition, Chomsky (1972) reported that those who read more complex material on their own had more grammatical competence in their first language.

5. Reading to children has been shown to relate to reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Research shows that "early fluent readers", children who can read before coming to school, have been read to, as have better readers in grade one. Cohen (1968) found that second grade minority children who were read to made better gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary than did comparison students. Reading to children familiarizes them with the conventions of written language, and thus makes prediction of meaning easier when they read for themselves (Smith, 1982a). It also gets them interested in reading - it gets them "hooked on books" (Fader, 1976).

A safe conclusion we can draw from this research is that reading exposure results in better reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, grammar, and may also be largely responsible for spelling competence (for a discusion of the relationship between spelling and reading, see Krashen, 1985a). While I don't think anyone would disagree with the conclusion that reading is helpful, we often behave as if were not true. Because books are expensive, for many people libraries are perhaps the major source of literacy. (Lamme, 1976, found that the fourth, fifth and sixth graders she studied obtained about 75% of their books for outside reading from the school library). Public libraries have been badly hurt by "Proposition 13 fever", while the state of most school libraries is, to say the least, unsatisfactory. School library collections are sparse, there is little time given to students to browse, and many school libraries are not open to any great extent before or after school or during recess and lunch. We are doing little to help the students establish a personal reading program, which is a shame, since it requires so little - more paperback books in the library (which cost a pittance compared to the price of computers), a sustained silent reading period, and helpful suggestions from teachers.

The situation may be even more serious. Reading exposure may not just be a way of developing literacy - it may be the only way we develop reading comprehension, writing style, and sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical competence. I suspect that this is the case, because it is fully consistent with the research summarized here, and because independently derived theories of reading and language acquisition come to the same conclusion. According to current reading theory, we "learn to read" by trying to make sense out of print (for strong evidence, see Smith (1982a) and Goodman (1982)); we learn to read by reading. In my own work in language acquisition, I have concluded that language acquisition happens in only one way, when we understand messages, or obtain "comprehensible input". We acquire language when we are focussed on what is said, not how it is said (see e.g. Krashen, 1982, 1985b). Language acquisition theory predicts that the conventions of the written language will be acquired in only one way - through comprehensible input in the written language, or reading exposure.

If reading ability and mastery of the conventions of writing are acquired in only one way, we must re-evaluate the effects of pedagogy that attempts to teach these "skills" directly. Direct instruction may only be a test, a test that children who have read outside of school pass, and that children who have not read outside of school fail. For the child who has read, the 15 word per week vocabulary/spelling list is not a challenge, since he is famliar with most of the words already. If he studies, he gets an "A"; if he doesn't study he gets "B". For the child who is not as lucky, most of the words are new. Even intense study will lead only to a D+ or C-.

Our solution to this problem has been entirely wrong-headed: we provide more of what doesn't work - more skill-building, more meaningless drills and exercises. As Richard Allington has reported, "Poor readers don't get to read much in reading groups" (the title of his paper and an accurate summary of his findings).

Even if we believe that reading exposure is important, we are often tempted to take the "short cut" of direct teaching. The "remedial" student, it is often argued, has no time for the "slow" route - he needs to "catch up" and prepare for tests. But the short cut may not exist - theory and research strongly suggest that there is no alternate route to literacy. We think phonics drills, spelling lists, and grammar exercises are effective because literate students (and teachers) can do them. As Smith has pointed out (Smith, 1984b), we are confusing the causes of literacy with the results of literacy.

Direct teaching of language does have a place in language arts, however, but it is a small place. I have argued that direct teaching has two functions: (1) Reading exposure does not provide us with all of our grammatical competence - there is a small residue we do not acquire that we need to consciously learn, including some grammatical rules (the lie/lay distinction in English, for some people), some punctuation rules (its/it's), and spelling demons. Since our standards for grammar, punctuation and spelling are 100%, these rules need to be taught and learned. But they make up a very small part of the total language arts program. (2) Direct teaching about language is subject matter teaching, known as linguistics, the study of language. Linguistics includes the study of language structure, language change, dialects, language acquisition, etc.. There are good reasons to include some linguistics in a language program, but it is certainly not the most important component. (For detailed discussion of the (peripheral) role of phonics, see Smith, 1982, and Krashen, 1985a. For reviews of research on the ineffectiveness of grammar teaching, see Krashen, 1984, 1985a).

The limits of reading

I have argued that reading is necessary for the development of language skills. There are, however, limits to the power of reading. First, just how much is acquired will depend on what the reader reads. As mentioned earlier, there is some research (C. Chomsky, 1972) that indicates that children who read more complicated books show greater grammatical competence. My hunch is that enough of *any* kind of reading will guarantee an acceptable level of competence in "mechanics". But a sophisticated command of vocabulary and grammar, and the ability to write convincingly in a certain style requires extensive reading, including reading in the style you wish to write in. To become a good journalist, you need to read newspapers. To learn wo write good business letters, you need to read lots of business letters.

A second kind of limit has to do with the reader's attitudes. Following Dulay and Burt (see Dulay et. al., 1982), I have claimed that language acquirers need to have a low "affective filter" - they need to be "open" to the input they hear and read. Similarly, Smith

(1984a, 1984b) has said that readers need to "read like writers' - they need to consider themselves to be potential members of the group of people who use reading and writing - they need to feel like potential members of the Literacy Club. When students "regard themselves as the kind of people who read and write" (Smith, 1984b) and have a chance to engage in meaningful and useful literacy activities, they automatically, without drills and exercises, acquire the written conventions Literacy Club members use.

Writing

A literacy program needs to include writing as well as reading. The goals of writing are not, however, identical to the goals of reading. Writing does not cause language acquisition - it is output, not input. But writing has other virtues. Smith (1983) explains that we write for two reasons. First, and most obvious, we write to communicate with others. But more important, we write to make ourselves smarter, to clarify our thinking. Most of our writing, even if we are published authors, is for ourselves.

As Elbow (1972) has noted, it is difficult to hold more than one thought in mind at a time. When we write our ideas down, the vague and abstract becomes clear and concrete. When thoughts are on paper, we can see the relationships between them and come up with better thoughts. Writing, as many diary writers will attest, helps us solve problems.

The key to using writing in this way is revision. Good writers are willing to revise, to rethink what they have read and come up with an improved version. Sommers (1980) has shown that good writers realize that their first draft is only a draft and that better ideas will come as they move from draft to draft. As Elbow has noted, "Meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with" (Elbow, 1982, p. 15).

Conclusion: A simple Model

When students read books and articles they are interested in, they acquire, as a by-product, those language "skills" that are typically the focus of direct instruction in the language arts. When students read, they will also be exposed to a wide range of viewpoints and ideas. When students write and are encouraged to revise their writing, they learn that writing is a powerful tool for clarifying their thoughts and solving problems.

If reading and writing are the basis of a literacy program, students need something to read and write about. In addition to a personal reading program, they need "enterprises," meaningful activities that naturally involve reading and writing (Smith, 1984b). They need to read about, discuss, and write about issues of current interest and great ideas that are always relevant. Our classes need to be places where students do this - for many students., the language class is the only place where they can be invited to join the Literacy Club (Smith, 1983).

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Theater as a Literacy Environment

What happens when an actress (who is also a linguist and a teacher of English as a Second Language) is sent to Requa, California? She stages a play, of course. Michele Weathers has acted in films and theatrical productions in Los Angeles. She has also been a teacher and is currently a graduate student in the socio-linguistics program at U.S.C.

Theater as a Literacy Environment

Michele Weathers

They wanted to know about goals.
I've never been careful,
I told them.
I miss so much as it is.
If I were careful, God,
I would miss it all.

Kate Braverman

"In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you."

Tolstoy

"Interview," the first act of **America Hurrah** by Jean-Claude van Itallie was presented at the California Conservation Corps Del Norte Center in June of 1984. It was performed by and for the corps members in their gym using milk cartons from the kitchen for furniture and sheets from the supply room as a backdrop. The actors wore blue jeans and sweatshirts, brought their own props if needed, and whistled their musical accompaniment. The Interviewers, contrary to stage directions, did not wear masks.

First Interviewer	Frank
First Applicant	Robert
Second Applicant	Jean
Third Applicant	Derek
Fourth Applicant	Joe
Second interviewer	Mark
Third Interviewer	Mary
Fourth Interviewer	Donna

"I'm sorry, I said seriously, but I'll have to study that question a good deal more before I can answer it."

Politician

I didn't want to direct a play. The heart of directing is paternalistic. A director can literally control the play and its actors. And it depends upon her/his benevolent generosity whether the experience is creative--or automated. I could imagine myself hurrying to produce a play for the "community" in three weeks with inexperienced actors. That would mean manipulating every move: "Say it this way . . . lift that arm . . . lower that eyebrow." I had preferred to teach an acting workshop so that no one would need to worry about "getting it right" and could perhaps discover something about he play, the characters, and themselves. While a workshop opens up discussions about everything from sex to economics, rehearsing a play demands getting it done. How could they be reconciled? I decided to take the middle road, get a group of people together and produce a play, but I would try very hard not to direct. Instead of making the corpsmembers spend their time following my "rules and regulations." I would give them the opportunity/ responsibility and let them fuck-up. Instead of changing them, I changed the environment and forced them to adapt. No direction--get it?

I chose "interview" because I assumed its situation would be familiar to the corpsmembers, more familiar than say **The Cherry Orchard's.** "Interview" has few restrictions on age, race, or sex (we even changed the lady's maid to a butler): and because it's an ensemble piece (Van Itallie calls it a "fugue for eight actors") there was no competition for larger or "more significant" parts. Also, all actors were on stage nearly all of the time, reducing worries about grand or even timely entrances. The play also works very well with novice actors. Acting requires that we recall and recreate behavior that has become unconcious, various human rituals long forgotten by most of us. It's easier to recall what it's like being in an interview in 20th-century America than having a tea party in 19th-century Russia. What emotions the play demands are very public--we all know about interviews, feeling nervous, competitive, and humiliated. Lines like "Thank you, I said, as casually as I could" seemed logical to them. The play called for what they already were-Americans who have done numerous odd jobs in their day and hope for something better. Within that frame they could add whatever personal behavior they wanted. Joe changed the role of a lady's maid to a butler and successfully brought the "fop" on stage; Robert saw his confession as a talk with his own father. What had been mysterous and private became public. Yet for all the freedom to be private, they also shared, as in a real interview, a peculiar comradeship of the insecure, the sense that we all row the same (leaky) economic boat together.

And while the "Interview" provided a restricted situation, there was also tremendous freedom. Although confined to the character of a painter or house cleaner they are primarily Americans. Within that flexible framework they were allowed to choose their characters; a bossy or sympathetic interviewer, a frightened or eager applicant, while keeping private what they consider socially unacceptable behavior be it emotional, sexual, or chemical. "I don't know why I'm telling you this, I said smiling."

First Applicant

I began rehersals with the people who showed up: Jean, Joe, Derek and Robert. The play calls for eight characters but the first night we improvised and read through it. I was careful to tell them not to try to "do" anything at this reading, not to try to read like the "character" or "with feeling" or anything like that. I explained that sometimes we get a rythym in our head or an idea about how this is supposed to sound or look and stick to that for all the rehersals, in fact for the entire run, and that often means there are no more discoveries made about the play, no more possibilities. "Just read it," I said, "If anything emotional comes up--that's fine," I read with them at first, with no expectations or answers, ignoring all stage directions and punctuation. They followed suit. No one was louder, faster, funnier, cried harder or laughed better than anyone else.

They wondered "what does this play mean?" This allowed us to talk about the necessity, inanity, of interviews. How it feels to be in one, give one, watch one from the outside as van Itallie, a Frenchman, must have. We considered America, the systems that make it work or not work--depending on your employment status. We talked about "success", that maypole we dance around. Conversations like this continued for the next three weeks. All of us had at one time or another been out of work, had sweated through interviews, felt stupid, lonely, frustrated. We realized that we weren't different from the people in the play.

I told them that by next time they should pick their characters. Whatever they wanted to do would be fine. If there were any conflicts we'd work them out, there were none. It was time to rehearse.

With no conflicts over character parts my limited cast and I were off to a great start. Usually the rehearsal process goes something like this: a few words about characters, and then most of the time is spent blocking: cross left on this line, and the play goes on. Rarely does the actor get any genuine rehearsal time--the time needed to discover and understand the simple logic of the play (what Strasberg would call "the event.") I wanted them to discover the truth in the play for themselves and not spend time trying to please the director. Occasionally, we looked at the stage directions - but only as a source of ideas not as anything to conform to. They were comfortable with following instructions . . . here was a chance to creatively avoid them.

But people used to following directions soon suffer what I like to call the "tyranny of ambiguity." "What do you mean we'll see what happens? What's supposed to happen?" When asked to be themselves these people froze; restrained their own unique personalities (what Marilyn French would call "dancing moments that were a person") and became victims van, Itallies mechanized America . . . "Just answer the questions, please." Tempting as it was to supply a stimulus (ex. yelling, choreographing) I stuck to my original restriction. I wasn't there to direct. There is a process going on here, the literacy culture can grow in this petri dish of a play if I follow my own advice and trust.

While this approach created a few days of anxiety for them I realized it was successful because in the end no one ever asked me "How did that look?" or "Was that okay?" We all knew when something was or wasn't working. We also knew everyone of us had different expectations. Here are some of them:

"Holy Mary Mother of God, must I endure all the sinners of this earth?"

Second Applicant.

Jean was confident and alert during the group scenes and when she had a few one liners; but it was different during "her" scene in which she had several paragraphs to deliver. She didn't memorize it and I'm familiar with the logic "If I memorize it I have no excuse but to be brilliant, if I bomb I can always use the excuse the I didn't know my lines very well." That usually works until curtain time and sure enough that's when I found her, kneeling down backstage in desperate prayer before the opening of the show. She just wanted to get through her big part. She was certain she wouldn't survive it. Divine inspiration or not, she did it. Early in the rehearsal process as I watched her anxiety mount I could have been very strict, insisting she learn her monologue, choreographing her into an unthinking puppet delivering excellent prose. But I wanted her to have an experience of what she could accomplish on her own. She did. She mnaged to say every single line in the speech without choking--a decent goal for a first play. She looked very happy when it was over.

"I took my last puff and strode resolutely into the room." Gym Instructor.

If Mark were eight years old I could have called him "hyperactive," by this time he had earned the more delicate title "fuckoff." Towards the middle of the rehersals I began to wonder if Mark had just been coerced by his roommate Robert into being in the play and if in fact he didn't really want to be there. Even late in the rehearsal process he would wander off when needed on stage, and didn't have his considerable number of lines memorized. When I finally called him on it I got his rebuttal the next night. He didn't show up for rehearsal, he'd gone out and gotten drunk, wandering in just in time for work the next morning. That night at dinner I didn't actually confront him but I did rather pointedly remind him about the rehersal. He showed up--with all his lines memorized! We all surprised ourselves by busting out in spontaneous applause after his lengthy dialogue as the gym teacher. After that he was there everytime, nodding, listening, climbing up onto the basketball hoop but present. At one point I said, "Mark why don't you just climb around up there for a while during this scene." Soon he became the vulture, observing the action from his perch. I wouldn't have thought of it. Is that what they mean by winging it?

"Do I have to tell you that?"

Fourth Applicant.

Joe started out with a lot of enthusiasm and good ideas. The second rehearsal he didn't show up because a friend of his had quit the center and he wanted to say goodbye to her. He came to the next rehearsal and gave no explaination for his absence (I hadn't solicited any) and seemed dejected. He inspired me at the first meeting but now seemed blase about the whole venture. Too much of a loyalist to leave he stuck with us but I sensed that his heart just wasn't in it anymore. In fact he had applied to transfer to another center.

He would rarely look out to the audience during a dialogue with them and would end all his sentences walking away or mumbling with his back turned. He maintained his distance throughout most of the rehearsals. I had no way of making him not sad. He did keep coming though. Never late, lines down . . . he liked something we were doing. Since he was the butler in the play (he replaced the Ladies Maid) he found he could use that snob appeal and finally his own charming cynicysm did come through during a dress rehersal with audience when, quite in character, he blurted out a rude "Yes Mam!" and everyone broke up. He'd found a character--himself.

"I've had little moments like that before, Doctor, I said, panicky little moments like that when the earth seems to slip out from under, and everything whirls around and you try to hold onto something, some object, some thought, but I couldn't think of anything."

Third Applicant.

Derek's dream was to be a stand up comic. As long as he was true to his own dry keep-em guessing wit he served the play. Once he found a line funny he would try to "act" it and of course it would lose it's humor. We talked about comedy and how it's funny because the person is taking the event so seriously. Only when we see it from a safe place can we laugh.

The comic had some problems when he had to work on the troubled banker in the therapist's office. Someone suggested to Derek, "It's like you're breaking apart in a million pieces." "No", I said, "How do you act a million pieces? It's simpler, you don't want to be alone, that all. Are you afraid of dying Derek, afraid of being alone?" "Yes." "Good," I said, "That's not so complicated." The fear of being alone is a reality most actors and audiences can live in. Trying to act "breaking apart in a million pieces" may cause you to do just that.

"You're doing fine, believe me (trust yourself)." They had a hard time believing me when I said they were doing okay since I hadn't given them any explicit directions to "do it like this." Derek had the classic experience of last minute loss of faith. Right before opening he was backstage with a yellow fishermans hat on his head. Frank came up to me frantically urging me to find Derek and get that damn hat away from him. When I found him hiding out I asked why, right before the play opens, he's decided to wear the hat? "It's for my character," he replied. "You're a banker Derek and it doesn't suit you or the banker. What's the reason?" "I just want to wear it." "No." Finally he showed me inside the hat was written his monologue. I took the hat, told him that was nonsence, he knew the monologue. "Look," I said, "All you need is the last line so you can cue the other actors. If you forget the monologue that's okay, you can make something up if you like since you know what's going on, or just jump to the last line so the play will continue. If you forget however, give yourself a little time to think of it--we'll wait--don't rush." Sure enough, two lines into the monologue Derek blanked. He sat and stared at the floor for a few seconds (it must have seemed to him like hours) then looked up and said, "My dog got run over and I made tacos out of him." then continued on with the rest without missing a line. Van Itallie couldn't have said it better, and what a fitting thing to tell your psychatrist! I generally caution actors against "improving" on the script--it's not necessary and usually falls flat--but in this case Derek was able to do two things very difficult for most actors--he stalled for time and got a laugh.

"Can you help me, Father, I said, as I usually do, and he said, as usual, nothing."

First applicant. (Housepainter).

Robert and I sat in the gym for about two hours with his monologue. When we started I didn't know much more about what was going on than he did. There was a man, a housepainter, going to confession. He wasn't getting any reaction from the priest and the things he confessed didn't seem like sins to either of us. He read through it a few times, standing, kneeling, sitting. The audience is going to get that it's a housepainter at confession, that's the play, the blueprint, the confines of the character, what does the actor bring? What's really going on here? We finally hit on it. Father. So we talked about Robert's father and Robert's life. It all got very exciting and everything just fell into place. "I'm the housepainter Father, the good housepainter." How much time have you spent of your life already trying to convince your father that you are a good and worthy person? The character gets no reaction from the priest and tries to get a rise out of him by using god's name in vain. Sound like Father and son? Do you ever feel like you're enough for your father? What could you do to please him? "Father, I said, springing it on him, Father, I'd like to join a monastery." And then the clincher, "Father, I said, I've tried lots of things in my life, I've gone in a lot of different directions, Father, and none of them seems any better than any other, Father, I said." Eventually this line became for Robert, . . ."I've gone in a lot of different directions and none of them seems to have worked out." With more rehearsal I would have corrected this but there wasn't time and Robert had found a connection with the character that was to make the play work for him.

"--you'd think a person would HELP a person, you'd think so." Fourth Applicant.

Eventually I got the additional three people required. Two were from USC, Frank and Donna, and one was a CCC staff person, Mary. Frank and I set a good example of the kind of dialogue that goes on in a collective, creative process-bouncing ideas off each other, and tolerating shortcomings one could call Frank the assistant director or (unofficially) the three cheers man.

"Nothing political in your Union dealings? Nothing Leftist, I suppose? Nothing Rightist either, I hope."

Fourth Interviewer

Along with a course in body-building, Poe and the controversial Feminist Rap Group and Current events classes Donna agreed to join our troupe mid-way through rehearsals and fill a much needed space. When she walked in that first day with all her lines memorized it was quite an inspiration to everyone. Donna is not the kind to let social etiquette dictate her conversation or demeanour, so she's certainly not going to let some lines in a play disguise who she is. The way she maintained her own delightful surley tone, laughing when she thought something was funny and showing unmitigated disdain when something disgusted her let everyone know that their feelings too were appropriate. Not just in life but on stage too!

"Do you think it's serious Roberta?"

Operator,

Mary announced early on that she wasn't going to memorize her lines. I knew this was coming out of the fear that she couldn't memorize them. She carried around a notepad with her lines on it and soon she was so removed from what was really going on in the play that she was the only one late on her cues. Everyone else, by that time had not only their lines but the logic of the play in their heads. It's hard to forget what to say or lose your place when you're involved "in an event" and you kow what's happening. I knew that Mary knew her lines because she knew exactly when to look at that notepad. I pointed this to her briefly one rehearsal and wondered aloud why she was late when she had her lines right there.

I think it was important for the corpsmembers to see a staff person struggle with something they had accomplished relatively painlessly. For them it was a lesson in our common humanity, vulnerability. Truly we were an ensemble--equals.

Mary performed the play with a crutch (the small notepad with her lines and cues.) However, once into the performance she realized that she did know those lines, she stopped reading the notebook, and some amazing things happened; her own natural ability to think on her feet came through. She began participating in a way I hadn't seen before. Impromptuly playing the eager fan snapping a picture of the politician, miming a forgotten prop, and once going back stage inconspiciously to retrieve another. Her next play, and I'm sure they'll be another for everyone, will be even better. She's been through that, now she knows what she can do.

"Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, HOSTILE." Psychiatrist.

Did I yell? Only once as an outsider grazed me with a basketball during one of our rehersals. Jeez I got mad sometimes. Like when Mark was bench pressing and didn't make an entrance, or when Mary announced she had no intention of memorizing her lines. Derek's hat, Jean's tears. Joe's attitude of "who cares--this is all really quite boring." I suppose I lost my patience as much as they did but we never let each other suffer because of it. I kept coming, they kept coming. From 9:00 to 10:00 every night for line readings even though they'd been up since 5:00 a.m. When someone didn't have their lines memorized, "That's okay," I'd say, "I'll feed them to you." As we all sat and I'd feed her/him every single line for an entire page--just to let them know how it felt to stand out there without a script, that there were no miracles--it had to get done. And we had the time and we'd all wait and if it didn't work out we'd see what happened with that too. "That will be an interesting experience for you," I didn't have to say anything about letting each other down or the scary part of being unprepared or the obvious part that I wasn't going to be out there in front of their friends--they all knew that.

Soon enough the joy of being in a play happened. Versions of the play being bandied about during dinner (shades of literacy--a changed environment--now they were changing their own). We all started noticing real life instances of the dialogue that sounded so foreign to us at the beginning. The ever popular final dress the night before turned out to be predictable awful, causing me to laugh hysterically and then to beg one more rehearsal before the performance.

The morning of production we all worked on the set and when it was finished sat in the audience and basked in the glory of our handiwork. They asked me about stand-up comedy, music and men. I knew I'd earned respect when Mark asked me, "Really if you didn't know me and you just met me would this tatoo be a turn off?"

We wrote our bio's for the program. Everyone coming up with a crazier question. What started with 'where were you born' turned into 'who was you're favorite son of Noah?'. Some wrote their own, others gave me the facts and asked me to put it into a form. When the pictures came back for the marquee it started again, 'Why don't you make a border for the pictures?". Joe brought a sheet to cover the plywood marquee with, "Should we put the bio's under the pictures?". With the technical work finished, our shakey (at best) and tedious (at worst) adventure was about to become public. I wished my cast the appropriate "break a leg," took my seat in the aduience, looked around and thought, "If you've any faults to find--go ahead."

What I can tell you about the play in my own (at best) biased and (at worst) mystical way is that it was successful. For the play that finally happened was not my play at all. They knew it wasn't mine. I know from experience that when the audience comes in you have to get more truthful because you have nothing else. When I saw what they brought to the play, I knew they'd come that far.

I'd like to comment briefly on the audience reaction to the production. It seemed disturbing to everyone that I didn't want them backstage before the performance. Even more so when I asked the corpsmembers standing behind the bleachers to please move up front so they could see the play. Seemed a simple enough request to me but only 4 or 5 of the 20 or so people crowded against the back wall (including one of our USC group who refused to budge even when I asked pointedy) moved up front. I squelched my desire to pull rank and ask the Center Director to direct people to the appropriate place. Suddenly I gained a new respect for my actors who had given up the social benefits of the "back of the room" and stepped out in the name of fun and curiousity.

The play was the culmination of the days events and now it was time to eat. I congratulated the actors with roses and kisses and we stacked our props up admidst handshakes and laughter. Corpsmembers approached me said "Thanks" and returned their programs to me. Another example of my/their ignorance. Had I known just how unfamiliar the corpsmembers had been I would have given myself a lot more unnecessary grief (although I should have known the first day when someone asked me if they had to know how to read to be in the play). I left the dressing room confused and elated with 40 programs in my hand to join the cast exchanging autographs, taking pictues, singing, and eating Bar-b-que.

"Good luck to you too. I said cheerfully, and turned my smile to the next one."

Politician.

Special Cases and Tutoring Alphabetic Illiterates

The "literacy crisis," we are told, consists of immense numbers of adults who cannot read or write. We are not told how this came to be. We are told that attention to "basics" and volunteer tutoring programs will "cure" the crisis. None of this seems to us to be true. We believe there are very few adults in America who cannot decipher and inscribe words. On the other hand, we agree that there are millions who hardly ever do so. We find the sources of this functional illiteracy close at hand, in the organization of education, in the creation and perpetuation of illiterate cultures. The following essays describe work with the few alphabetic illiterates we found among the hundreds of corpsmembers we worked with. Irene Clark's essay is not particularly encouraging. Lee Leeson's points to some techniques that have proven useful.

Irene Clark is Director of the Writing Center at U.S.C. Her publications include Writing From The Center. Lee Leeson is Director of the U.S.C./California Writing Project.

Special Cases

Irene Clark

Special Cases

"I've got three, what you might say; 'special cases' for you," Olga said, smiling apologetically and gesturing toward a table in the back of the room where three young men were sitting--one white, one black, one oriental. Silently, they slumped in their chairs. One had his eyes closed.

Special cases.

There they sat in their khaki uniforms by the window, and I decided quickly that I would devote this first session to finding out who they were and then, maybe, to determining what they might need. As Freire advocates, "education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students."[1] So I asked a lot of friendly questions and learned a lot of curious information. Immediately I discovered that Paul, a slim, sharp looking Chinese American, had been heavily involved with gangs, an affiliation of which he seemed proud. In fact, later on, when we were better acquainted, he showed me his tattoos and several scars he had on his arms. Paul liked to think of himself as "tough," a sharp guy who had learned a lot about life when he was in the gangs, and his staccato, tightlipped manner of speaking reinforced the "tough guy" image.

During this first session, Paul also mentioned that he had moved to his own apartment when he was only fifteen. "After all," he said, "I had plenty of money and it was easy to pay." But then he had gotten lonely, couldn't figure out the dish washer, and didn't know how to cook. So eventually he had moved back home with his mother and younger brother.

Paul was good at math, he said, and throughout our acquaintance he told me frequently that he was "pretty smart," a lot smarter than his younger brother, who was going to be "in trouble, soon." "I try to tell him about the gangs, but he don't listen," he would say, matter-of-factly. "He'll be in trouble soon," he said and smiled.

Soon after he began working with me, Paul left the project to take classes at a local community college, and I learned later on that he had gotten a job. Paul may have been a "special case," but as he himself recognized, he was "pretty smart" and was probably going to be relatively successful, with or without my help.

The other special cases, Dave and Ray, sat up slightly as I approached, Dave opening lusterless blue eyes, Ray extending a giant black hand in my direction. I found out that Dave was "always tired." "I don't get no sleep with the baby, and I gotta work until late," he said in his slow manner. I asked him about his baby, and he told me that she was named "Laura," that she was only three weeks old, and that he himself was only twenty-one. I also learned that his wife was from Mexico, was older than he was, and spoke only Spanish. "Do you speak Spanish?" I asked. "Nah, hardly any, couple a words," he said. "But she takes care of me. She's my old lady." He laughed, revealing chipped, discolored teeth.

Ray was very tall, with strong broad shoulders, an explosive laugh, and a habit of thumbing nervously through the dictionary, as though he might find what he was looking for if he could only locate the proper page. As I handed him his bright yellow folder, he pointed to the word "Ray" and said, "That's not my name. My name's 'Cortez'."

He then picked up a pencil, crossed out "Ray," and wrote "Cortez" in strong, uneven letters. "I'm supposed to be in college now," he said, "on a basketball scholarship. But then I broke my leg and couldn't play no more." Cortez' speech was slurred, and he used a heavy black dialect.

I asked him how he liked the C.C.C.

"Its supposed to be a good opportunity," he said, "but, man, some of those supervisors. They're- Man! It's hard to explain . . "

"They think they so important," offered Paul. "But they're not, you know?" He smiled.

"Yeah. Right. They just push you around," continued Ray. "I'm leaving soon anyway. I'm going to be a firefighter and I'm getting married soon and my girlfriend makes a lot of money anyway, running a home for crippled kids, and I help her with that. I love to work. And it's a good thing, because I been working since I was fifteen when my old man died."

Of course I had no insight into how much of Cortez' revelations had been truthful, but I recall being pleased at his willingness to talk. As Carl Rogers suggests, "If I can listen to what he tells me, if I can understand how it seems to him, if I can sense the emotional flavor which it has for him, then I will be releasing potent forces of change within him."[2] Thus encouraged, I planned to begin with personal narratives, nothing too long, perhaps one paragraph, and then maybe I could assess their writing abilities.

Toward the end of the session, then, I moved the conversation around to the subject of writing, about how writing was a means of self-realization, how writing could be fun and a useful skill to acquire, how we were all here for the summer to work together on developing writing skills. To my surprise, both Paul and Cortez seemed pleased to hear about these things, although Paul told me he could write "okay" already and Cortez said that he had lots of thoughts, but could never spell anything.

"Well, let's just start with a few sentences, something really simple that you kow a lot about already," I began. "Write a few sentences about how you like to spend your free time. You know--going out or movies or sports--things like that."

Paul and Cortez picked up their pencils and began to write, Cortez looking up almost every word in the dictionary.

Dave just sat there, a sheepish smile on his face.

"I can't do it," he said, grinning. "I can't write."

"Don't worry about how it comes out," I reassured him. "I don't care about correctness. Just write anything at all. I'm not grading you or anything." I smiled as pleasantly as possible.

"I can't," Dave said again.

I tried again.

"Maybe you'd like to write about something else," I suggested. Maybe about your baby daughter. I'd love to hear about her. You know, I have four children myself, and I know how they keep you busy." I smiled again.

Dave just sat there.

"Okay, let's work together," I said finally. "For instance, how old is your daughter?"

"Three weeks," said Dave.

"Okay there's a beginning, right there," I said. "Why don't you write, 'I have a daughter who is three weeks old'?"

"I can't," said Dave, and then I finally figured out what he was really saying. Dave was not only unable to write; he was unable to write because he was unable to read--not one word, except for his name. He was over six feet tall, twenty-one years old, a husband and father in one of the largest cities in the United States, and all he could read was his name.

So there we were--six weeks looming ahead. Paul, scarred veteran of the Chinese gangs, who felt he knew everything already; Cortez, alias Ray, who seemed incapable of distinguishing fantasy from reality; sandy-haired, child-like Dave, who couldn't read anything but his name. Olga had certainly been right about the specialness of these cases.

Based on that first session, though, I developed a plan for the next six weeks for Cortez and Dave (Paul had already informed me that he would not be present at the next session). The work of Shaugnessy, D'Eloia, and Perl[3] suggested that for a student such as Cortez, who exhibited a general unfamiliarity with what might be called the dialect of formal writing but who could read and write at an elementary level, it would be useful to generate writing assignments of his own choosing and adhere to the same sequence of instruction as I would with more experienced writers--that is, we would emphasize the global aspects of content and structure, as opposed to the surface elements of spelling and mechanics. However, as Shaugnessy says, "students themselves are uneasy about encouragement to ignore the problem of error, often interpreting them as evasions of the hard work that lies before teachers and students in the craft of writing is ever to be mastered,"[4] and Cortez, himself, had expressed an interest in being able to write Standard English and in improving his spelling. Therefore I obtained a copy of the "Comp-Lab" Exercises,[5] designed specifically for dialect interference and planned to create spelling lists derived from his own writing. I also planned to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening by bringing in books which might be of interest to him, books concerned with sports.

For Dave, I stormed the Education Library and xeroxed materials for beginning readers, many concerned with word "families" such as "at," "et," and "it," complete with pictures. Although reading theorists rightly maintain that fluency in reading is not accomplished by decoding to sound and that "decoding directly from letters to sound is unnecessary as well as inefficient,"[6] it is also true, as Gibson and Levin point out that any system of writing with a phonetic base, whether syllable or alphabetic, demands some perceptual analysis of the speech stream in order to match it to the witten code. . . . The child must develop the ability to hear *segmentation* in what is spoken to him before we can reasonably expect him to learn to map the written code to speech or vice versa.[7]

Extremely easy, phonics-based materials, I also hoped, would provide Dave with a few instances of success, which might motivate his efforts. I also planned to supplement phonics instruction with a vocabulary of "sight" words and with additional experiences in reading short sentences. At some point, if the program lasted beyond the scheduled six weeks, I might arrange to have Dave tested. But with the short time we had to work together, I felt it would be preferable for Dave to feel as if he were really learning something, rather than simply spending time being tested.

At the next session, I presented Cortez and Dave with my plans. Cortez was going to work on generating short essays and on learning Standard English and spelling. Dave would begin to learn to read. After some prewriting discussion on the problems with the C.C.C., then, I assigned Cortez to write about his feelings concerning the C's and began to work with Dave, who, I was relieved to discover, did know his letters and a few of the sounds they represented.

After apologizing to Dave for the juvenality of the material (He said he didn't care. He just wanted to learn to read.), I began helping him sound out short words in the "at" family, linking words with pictures. At first, when presented with the word "cat," Dave said he couldn't read it, but then, when we sounded it out, he was, with difficulty, able to recognize it and to sound out words such as "pat," "rat," "sat," and "mat," each word a terrific effort for him. I noticed, though, that he seemed to have great difficulty remembering any of the words we dicussed; each time he came to the word "cat," for example, he had to sound it out all over again.

This inability to remember words I attributed to Dave's disinclination to view words as integrated wholes and print as a means of obtaining meaning. Unwilling to risk making a mistake, Dave had developed a "microperspective" toward text, which had resulted in a general block toward print. Thus, Dave felt that he had to sound out words, letter by letter in order to read them, and he refused to use contextual clues, such as pictures or syntax in order to predict the meaning of a text.

Stephen Kucer, of the Department of Education at the University of Southern California, worked with Dave after the summer on "predictable" books, books with a great deal of predictable repetition, such as "The Three Little Pigs." Kucer noted that when Dave was presented with a series of sequential pictures, he was unwilling to risk reconstructing a story from them, but would, rather, segment the pictures into discreet, unconnected units. Even preschoolers, Kucer maintains, will risk predicting a story from pictures; and Dave's unwillingness to do so, Kucer attributes to the type of schooling Dave had received. Presumably, somewhere in his life, Dave had perceived the letter by letter method as the only risk-free way to read, and he was determined to avoid making a mistake at all costs, even at the expense of reading at all. According to Kucer, Dave's inablity to remember words he had read was the result of this segmentation--with no contextual system in which to place the words he read, Dave viewed each word as an isolated entity consisting of isolated letters, unconnected with any frame of reference.

Dave's inability to remember even the simplest words may also be attributed to the way he saw himself in relation to the world. Apparently, no one had ever taken much of an interest in him -- obviously, his school experience had not been even minimally supportive--and consequently he had developed a pervasive indifference toward everything, even toward himself. Thus, the mental effort necessary to remember even a very simple word required more attention and greater concern than Dave was capable of generating. Perpetually enervated, Dave sleepwalked through his life -- nothing for him had much meaning, certainly not words on a page.

To direct Dave toward viewing words as connected with meaning, we selected two words for him to concentrate on until the next session, words which he used in his everyday life, words which would be "his."

These two words, "chips" and "stop" I wrote on index cards, which I gave to him. "Look at these two words whenever you get a chance," I advised him. "Then you will know them whenever you come upon them."

Cortez spent a lot of time writing his first essay and came up with the following:

> The C.C.C. is a plast for a person that is not look for a further. The directer is a person that should help yoo and he or his shold be a helper not some one that can mak you unhappy at the things you are doing. I do not like the C.C.C. becaues of many of thing. They need to inprove in the further things. The directers and the the Red hat and the yellow hat need to look at ther selfs. I am not happy that I spend my 8 mouth on my valuable life in the C.C.C. Favoritism is a big thing in the C.C.C.
>
> There is a man in ther that have so mush favoritism that mak me very confused about him. Favoritism it the C.C.C. is used very much. It take the joy out of being ther. It is very hard to work around it. this can mak you very confused. I meed by that is I don't know who to respect and who to follow for a leader. There are three kinds of hats yellow red and blue. The yellow is the headmen or women of the hold crew. Red hats is the boss of the crew. The blue hats is the C.C.C. The way you can have a better positions is to become a good friend of the higher hat.

One may note that Cortez' first effort did not exhibit any of the usual syntactic errors classified by Shaughnessy, although he did have problems with dialect interference and with spelling even very simple words. His difficulties were compounded by poor articulation in spoken English, which presented problems when he tried to translate speech into the written code. Thus, the use of the word "plast" for "place," "hold," for "whole," "mouth" for "months," and "further" for "future" was due to the fact that Cortez actually pronounced these words that way. Yet there was no doubt that his short essay had communicated his feelings about the C.C.C. and that he had a surprising sense of rhetorical structure. In fact, if one analyzed the structure of his thinking in that essay, one could discern a reasonable coherent presentation of ideas, as suggested below:

> The C.C.C. is a plast for a person that is not look for a further. [My topic concerns the ways in which the C.C.C. does not help its members.] The directer is a person that should help yoo and he or his shold be a helper not some one that can mak you unhappy at the things you are doing. [I begin with the shortcomings of the director.] I do not like the C.C.C. becaues of many of thing. [I reaffirm my topic--the shortcomings of the C.C.C. and ways of improving it.] They need to inprove in the further things. The directers and the the Red hat and the yellow hat need to look at ther selfs. [One way to improve the C.C.C. is for the people in authority to reexamine their priorities.] I am not happy that I spend my 8 mouth on my valuable life in the C.C.C. Favoritism is a big thing in the C.C.C. [The main problem in the C.C.C. is favoritism.]
>
> There is a man in ther that have so mush favoritism that mak me very confused adout him. Favoritism it the C.C.C. is used very much. It take the joy out of being ther. It is very hard to work around it. This can mak you very confused. [I am confused and unhappy because of the hierarchical structure of the C.C.C. which tolerates favoritism.] I meed by that is I don't know who to respect and who to follow for a leader. There are 3 kinds of hats yellow red and blue. The yellow is the headmen or women of the hold crew. Red hats is the boss of the crew. The blue hats is the C.C.C. I define the system to show how favoritism works.] The way you can have a better positions is to become a good friend of the higher hat. [The way to advance in the C.C.C. is through contacts rather than merit.]

It was obvious that Cortez could think and had good ideas, but what he was most concerned about was his poor spelling and black dialect interference. I therefore chose words from his essay that he had misspelled (place, future, make, much), discussed the rule about silent "e," and gave him a book about basketball heroes, in which he had expressed a keen interest. He did indeed know a great deal about basketball, could identify most of the players, and seemed to understand quite well what he read. I left that second session feeling greatly encouraged.

The following week, though, Dave still could not recognize the word "cat," although it took him a shorter time to sound it out, and he had lost the two index cards I had given him; in fact, at first he did not remember that he had had them. We worked some more on the "at" words, and at the end of the session, I gave him an index card on which was written the word "beer."

That second week, Cortez still could not spell "place," future," "make," or "much," although he had read the book about basketball and was eager for another book I had found concerned with football. Cortez spent the week writing a short paragraph about Taco Bell, his second job, and I gave him another short list of spelling words generated from his essay. We also worked on the Comp-Lab exercises changing verb tenses from the present to the past.

And so the weeks went by, sometimes interrupted by C.C.C. work on floods in Arizona, which prevented any of my special cases from attending our sessions. Cortez wrote an essay about the "pool" party he had held at his grand home on the Fourth of July, but kept reiterating how difficult it was for him to write and how he felt that the C.C.C. was treating him "bad." He often seemed preoccupied, unable to concentrate.

Dave lost his "beer" card, still could'nt read the word "beer," and seemed more fatigued than ever. He moved on to the "it" family, but we soon discovered that he had forgotten how to read "cat," "fat," or "sat." He told me that he had spent the Fourth of July "getting loaded."

At the end of the six weeks, Cortez had read many of the books in my collection, and he wrote a nicely organized essay about himself, although he now checked every spelling word with me, instead of looking for them fruitlessly in the dictionary. This last essay was certainly Cortez' best effort and does show significant improvement in writing:

ABOUT CORTEZ

I knew a young man by the name of Cortez. He is a man with a lot of ambitions. Cortez is a tall dark man, about 6'4". He enjoys working. The reason Cortez likes working is because of his father. His father was a carpenter bulding houses and doing all kinds of repairs.

Cortez has many jobs, like working for the California Conservation Corps and Taco Bell as a cook. He enjoys working with handicapped children. He feels that a man is a real man when he is working. Working means a lot to Cortez because that is something that no man can take from him

Cortez wants to become an important person in life, not just an s.s. number. He feels that you can do anything if you put your mind to it. The future is his life. That is the real reason for being so motivated. Motivation comes from his father. His pops was a very good man with a lot of goals.

Shortly after the last session, Cortez left the C.C.C. permanently, and I have not heard anything about him. I would like to believe that he has realized some of his hopes and that he really believes that he can "do anything if you put your mind to it."

Dave moved on to work with another teacher, Sid, during the fall session, and apparently was quite interested in learning to read, because he had been promoted to a supervisory position which required the writing of short reports. Sid told me that since Dave himself was incapable of writing the reports, Sid had written down what Dave told him, and that after a few weeks, Dave was able to recognize a few of the words which appeared most frequently. Sid also reports that Dave seemed more energetic and assertive, more capable of speaking up for himself than he had at the beginning of the six week summer session.

Unfortunately, though, Dave, too, left the C.C.C. shortly afterwards, and the last news we heard of him was that he was in jail. Apparently, faced between the choice of paying numerous traffic tickets or of going to jail, Dave had opted for the latter, preferring the "security" of prison to the "risks of liberty."[8] None of us knows what he has been doing since.

In evaluating my work with these "special cases," the most obvious point to be made is that six weeks are unlikely to compensate for a lifetime of neglect. Maybe with Cortez I had succeeded in igniting a tiny spark of hope, and had I worked longer with him on a more intense basis, he might have learned to write a relatively error free paragraph and to use Standard English with greater confidence. Certainly his last piece of writing had been his best, and he had learned to spell at least a few more words. And perhaps, just perhaps, my efforts in his behalf had moved him to perceive that only he had the power of action, and that he, himself, had the power to generate his own liberation. Certainly the name "Cortez," the name he himself had chosen, suggests his concern with action and courageous deeds. And certainly Cortez' last essay, with its emphasis on manhood and personal worth, suggests that he had begun to involve himself in the struggle to maintain his humanity.

Despite this progress, though, I do not predict that Cortez will realize his goals. Although he seemed aware of his problems and mouthed optimistic generalizations about self-realization, Cortez had been indifferent and angry for too many years, and for too many years he had depended on fabrication as a substitute for self-worth. Without self-confidence and without the ability to evaluate himself insightfully, Cortez is unlikely to initiate positive action. For him, the six week session was probably too late.

For Dave I am even less optimistic. Submerged in the "culture of silence,"[9] unable to read and write, he seemed incapable of looking critically at himself or the world, a necessary precondition of the humanizing process.

What must be emphasized finally, though, is that despite Olga's designation and my acquiescence in it, Paul, Ray, and Dave are not "special cases" at all. All over American cities, numerous "Pauls" smile mirthlessly at gang-related violence, countless "Rays," imprisoned by inadequate language abilities, dream futilely of heroic deeds, and too-many illiterate "Daves", unprepared for adulthood, are condemned to childishness all of their lives, unable to achieve the self-awareness necessary for instituting change. Perhaps I was able to make a small difference. But it is apparent that a great deal remains to be done.

NOTES

[1] Paulo Freier, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1983), p. 59.

[2] Carl Bogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 332.

[3] Mina P. Shaugnessy *Errors and Expectations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 90-159; Sarah D'Eloia, "Teaching Standard, Written English," *Journal of Basic Writing,* Volume 1 (Spring 1975), Number 1, pp. 5-14; Sondra Perl, "The Composing Precesses of Unskilled College Writers," *Research in the Teching of English,* 13 (December 1979), pp. 317-336.

[4] Shaugnessy, p. 11.

[5] Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Michael Southwell, "The Comp-Lab Project: An Experimental Basic Writing Course, *Journal of Basic Writing,* 2, No.2 (1979), 19-37.

[6] Frank Smith, *Psychclinguistics and Reading* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), p. 186.

[7] Eleanor J. Gibson and Harry Levin, *The Psychology of Reading* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 228.

[8] Freire, 3.

[9] Freire, p. 10.

Tutoring Alphabetic Illiterates

Lee Leeson

Tutoring Alphabetic Illiterates

In our experience, alphabetic illiteracy is relatively rare in the California Conservation Corps. In a year of working with corpsmembers from the L.A. Urban Center, we discovered only three -- Dave, Terry, and Louis -- who were almost total non-readers, who could encode or decode very little print beyond their own names. Dave and Louis were among our first students in the Model Literacy Project. Terry joined us only in the last few weeks before the first phase of the project ended.

Initially, Dave and Louis were in study groups with more fluent readers. Later, because they were self-conscious about not reading and because they seemed to respond best to intensive individual tutoring, we decided to form a small group specifically for corpsmembers with very minimal reading skills. The composition of this group, like that of others in the project, fluctuated over the course of the year but remained small, usually two to four students at a time, non-readers and others reading at approximately second or third grade levels.

As some corpsmembers left, others were added; seven different individuals, including one student from a local continuation high school, spent at least some time in this group during the school year. All were male -- one white, three black, and three Latino. All, except Michael, the continuation school student, had dropped out of school at some point, generally in junior high or early high school. All three Latino corpsmembers had been born in Los Angeles; for two of them, Spanish was their first language and they had begun school knowing only a little English. Both of these young men are, as adults, fluent in English and Spanish.

Except for Louis who was with the project from beginning to end, the other corpsmember's time with the group averaged only one to two months. Richard and Terry joined near the end of the project. Art was successful in finding a job that paid better. Michael dropped out. Dave was arrested and spent time in jail. Yves was fired for fighting.

Obviously, alphabetic illiteracy as a "problem" cannot be considered in isolation as simply a skills deficiency. It seems associated, though not necessarily in clear cause and effect relationships, with other difficulties. Terry, for example, has had several serious illnesses and continues to suffer from a number of physical ailments including problems with his vision. All of these young men express feelings of low self-esteem and blame themselves for their lack of success in school. All approach tasks involving print with high anxiety and expectations of failure. Both Dave and Yves are extremely angry young men. Yves is especially intelligent, an excellent talker, and a leader among his peers. In his early twenties, he seems to have a growing awareness of the gap between his skills and those valued by the majority society. He senses the almost super-human effort he would have to make to bridge that gap. For both Dave and Yves, not trying is often easier than risking another failure.

Several of these men are fathers; all have trouble surviving financially on a small salary. All struggle with the day to day difficulties of living in the inner city.

Corpsmembers arrived in the reading group either because they had been identified by another instructor or by supervisory personnel in the Corps, or because in an initial interview with the program director, they themselves indicated they had serious problems with reading and writing.

New students invariably approached the group anxiously. I began by explaining that the group was very flexible and that we could work on anything related to reading and writing. Rather than rely on an anxiety producing and not necessarily accurate reading test as a diagnostic measure, I had available a wide variety of reading materials ranging from beginning materials for adults and some of the less childish looking children's books to popular magazines. I left the corpsmember alone to browse through these and asked him to let me know which ones seemed about right for him, which ones he thought he might begin reading. This strategy proved to be successful for all seven students. Non-readers chose the beginning materials. No student ever chose materials that were "too easy" for him. Those who had some reading skills rejected the primers and chose books they could comprehend with a bit of extra effort. All seemed more relaxed when they realized they could control the level at which they would work.

I also started each corpsmember on some sort of writing during his first days in the group. Together we would work out a project. Most began by writing about themselves -- short pieces that later appeared in the Project newspaper. I encouraged even the non-readers to do as much of this writing themselves as they could, inventing spelling as necessary, even representing a word with a single consonant if they couldn't guess at any other letters. We would then read this together and I would transcribe it for the newspaper adding any additional material that they wanted to dictate for me to write down.

From these initial activities, each student and I tried to work out our next steps. I aimed for high involvement from the corpsmember, low anxiety, and a balance of reading and writing.

Because students' abilities and interests varied so much and because they entered and left the group at different times, each one pursued a highly individualized program. However, Louis, because he was with the project the longest, might serve as an example of the non-reader and Michael and Yves, both with the Project for several months, might represent students with slightly better skills.

Louis was committed to sounding out words by phonetic principles that he seemed only vaguely to understand. He seemed to ignore completely context or his knowledge of the world as possible resources in reading. Given a picture of an apple with the letters "A-P-P-L-E" printed beneath it, Louis would laboriously try to sound out the word rather than guess at what it might be. Even when Louis dictated a sentence, "I love my son," he would attack reading it back letter by letter instead of recalling what he had just said.

Louis and I tried a number of different strategies generally based on psycholinguistic theories about reading. I encouraged Louis to make predications about the meaning of the print he encountered, to guess, to skip words he didn't know and try to get a general idea of what was being communicated. We began with Laubach beginning reading materials for adults (although we didn't follow their methods), some of the less childish looking children's books, and writing that Louis dictated to me. With the Laubach materials and children's books, we spent a lot of time pre-reading -- looking at pictures, going over some key words in the story, reading the title, talking about what the story might be about. I might read the beginning of the story and ask Louis what he thought would happen next. I tried to structure the reading so that Louis would be successful. I generally asked Louis to read silently and then just tell me what the story was about rather than read a story to me word for word. After we had read a few lessons in the beginning Laubach book, I tried blanking out key words that could be guessed from context to get Louis to rely on this source of information.

After we had worked together for a few months, we did return to some attention to phonics or sound-symbol correspondence, starting with word families of the "rat, cat, sat" variety. We spent some time each week with an adult workbook that introduced phonics in the context of stories, rhymes, cartoons, and cross-word puzzles. I continued to stress that sound-symbol correspondences are only one source of information in reading. We tried to relate the information in the workbook to new words in stories and in Louis' own writing, particularly generating new words from ones Louis already knew, for example, "gave" and "save" from the short form of his son's name, "Dave."

Michael and Yves could produce short pieces of writing with only a little difficulty. They could read and recount at least the general idea of a variety of the high interest books that are written at about a third or fourth grade level for teenagers in "remedial" reading classes. Michael enjoyed reading these books and keeping a summary log of them in a small notebook. In a reversal of roles, Michael would make up questions about the stories, I would answer them, and Michael would check my work. Michael seemed to like group activities. I brought in movie ads I had cut out. Looking at the pictures, titles, names of actors, etc. Louis and Michael tried to predict what the movie might be like. They wrote (Louis dictating to me) about which movie they would like to see and why.

Yves was often willing to participate in these activities but was continually frustrated by the gap between his verbal abilities and his reading and writing skills. Initially, he was very anxious to advance in the Corps. Louis told him that crew leaders had to be able to read and write. Yves asked me to find out what kind of writing they did and our first project was to compose an accident report based on an injury Yves himself had suffered on the job. In a relatively short time, Yves was promoted to Acting Crew Leader.

Yves seemed hungry for information about the world beyond south central Los Angeles. He loved to talk about almost everything -- Black Muslims, the war in El Salvador, life in the Corps, morality, the difficulty of making right choices. Most of what he could read was not sophisticated enough for him and he quickly grew impatient trying to work through more difficult material in newspapers or magazines. He excelled in verbal duels with his peers and hated the slowness of his writing.

The tape recorder turned out to be an excellent tool for Yves to use. We decided to produce a series of interviews of corpsmembers for the Project newspaper. Yves was quite effective in adopting a rather formal interview style which he thought was suitable for a media interview. He was good at asking leading questions and moderating the ensuing discussion. I wanted Yves to try transcribing at least some tape himself but he again found this too frustrating. However, he avidly read over and over again all of the transcriptions I had time to make. I insisted that he try to write introductions and conclusions to his interviews. We worked out a system. He would guess at the "small" words; I would supply on request the spelling of the "hard" words he refused to guess at. I still have a list of some of them -- "communication," "favoritism," "responsibility," "personality," "confidence," "people," "teacher." Writing was still hard work under this system but came closer to representing Yves verbal ability.

How successful were any of these strategies? We believe that the success in literacy programs is not measured on standardized tests but by how well individuals can use literacy skills to get and use information, to develop new knowledge for themselves, and to participate more fully in their culture.

In this view, alphabetic literacy, the ability to encode and decode, cannot be directly equated to functional literacy, the ability to use reading and writing effectively in one's own context.

Louis, suprisingly perhaps, in the course of the Project, became in many ways more functionally literate than other corpsmembers like Michael and Yves who certainly had better basic skills. Louis, in Frank Smith's terms, "joined the club" of people who routinely use reading and writing to accomplish day to day tasks and for their own pleasure. Fairly early on, Louis bought his own folder and pen and began to carry these around with him. In addition to blank paper, he kept in his folder current bills to be paid, insurance forms to be filled out, his resume, and other important papers. Later, he added an address book. Through his teacher at the L.A. Urban Center, he began to correspond with a pen pal in Japan. After a few months, he asked if I would help him get a card at the local public library. From then on, he picked his own materials, generally preferring imaginative and humorous children's books to the drier adult literacy material about Mr. Hill's fishing trip or Bob's new car. Soon, almost every week, Louis brought in something that he wanted me to help him fill out, or write, or read. Although he could not manage the encoding and decoding himself, he was learning how to use reading and writing to pay taxes, make insurance claims, apply for jobs, keep in touch with another corpsmember gone off to the Academy.

By the end of the Project and the end of Louis' time in the C.C.C., Louis could read some simple three and four letter words, and some other more difficult words if they appeared in a familiar context. He was by no means yet an independent reader. When I last spoke to him, he had not yet found a job. He wanted to continue to study in adult basic education classes, but I know that will be difficult without the support of the Corps and individual attention from a teacher. On the other hand, he is highly motivated and has strong support from his family, so we hope he wil continue to build on the success he has already experienced.

The situations of young adults like Yves and Michael are even more difficult to assess. At best they had a positive experience and built up confidence in their ability to read and write and to learn. Richard and Terry are still in the Corps, apparently doing well, and Terry especially misses our classes. Michael is supposed to be studying at a nearby continuation high school but his attendance is irregular. Yves and Dave, as far as we know, are on the street again.

Our experience makes us question how successful "voluntary" literacy programs, in which neither teachers nor students receive any financial support, can be in reaching individuals like Louis, Michael, and Yves. Because becoming a corpsmember requires filling out forms, an interview, and considerable self-discipline, we assume that the young men we worked with are generally more resourceful and more highly motivated than scores of other young adults with serious literacy deficiencies. The Corps offers a structured environment that can integrate work, education, and recreation; yet, we recognize, that even within that structured environment the first steps in literacy involve frightening risks, demand enormous individual effort, and require support.

Trivial Pursuit

Elspeth Stuckey's paper, "Trivial Pursuit," gives an account of her experience working with a fourth grade student in the South and with a corpsmember at the Del Norte Center. She finds that much of what seems puzzling about the corpsmember's negative attitudes toward literacy were illuminated by and illuminated the experience of elementary special education. Her current research involves the development of a theory of educational culture focussed on the relationship between literacy, race, and class in the United States.

Trivial Pursuit

Elspeth Stuckey

Trivial Pursuit

Refusing to read or write is an odd thing. Why would anyone choose to exercise illiteracy? In public school, the refusal to read or write is not something among the realm of choices. Students who fail to learn are presumed to have something quasi-physiologically wrong with them. Once out of school, however, grown-up illiterates bear a peculiar responsibility for their inadequacy. What once was a disability is now blameworthy.

This is the story of that social transition of literacy. It is the story of the fallacy of can't read vs. won't. It is also the story of the social economies of skills, of the emergence of illiteracy from schooled literacy, the story of the consequences of refusing to learn to read or write.

William is twenty. He was a corpsmember during the Del Norte/Requa Center Literacy Project in June 1984. He has a high school diploma. His Slosson Oral Reading Level is 6. Jules is a nine year old fourth grader. He attends a small southern elementary school in a rural town. He was considered a bright student until the fourth grade when for mysterious reasons he stopped reading. Jules was referred to me to see if I could discover the problem. I was a part-time, voluntary reading tutor. Until I met Jules, much of William's attitude and behavior toward literate activities seemed consistent with the usual assessments. Three weeks with Jules turned the time I had spent with William into a retrospective lesson, however, and that lesson informed my work as a tutor for the fourth grade. What I began as seeing as similarities became recapitulation. How bright people become illiterate people came to be less important a question than why it had to happen and what would happen to Jules and William next.

The first realization I had was that both Jules and William could read and write. They had remarkable strategies for text construction and they demonstrated the most bizarre orthographics (along with almost idiosynchratic handwriting), but they got through texts when there was enough demand. Yet they denied this facility vehemently. How was I then to establish the existence of an ability (however skewed) when there is investment in not doing it?

I took to the second meeting with Jules an old Book-of-the-Month club edition of "Romeo and Juliet." I pointed to a passage in the preface and told Jules to read it. He said it was too hard. He said he couldn't read. I told him to skip the words he didn't know. He sounded like a word emitter or a botched splice of tape. He repeated often, "I can't read this. It's too hard." At the end of several paragraphs I asked him what he was reading about.

"I don't know."

I sat still.

"Translations."

"And?"

"I don't know."

"Who are Romeo and Juliet?"

"Hapless lovers."

This scenario, of course, is not reading. It is something of an embarrassment to invoke it, but it shows Jules *could* read.

Months earlier, William had pored over a paperback copy of *A Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich.* He said his eyes hurt too bad to read. He said he didn't understand Russian. He sighed and swore. At times, I would read stretches to keep the pace moving. Soon, however, William was reading pages in a sitting. He would forget himself and begin to mumble the Long Russian surnames; he would look up in surprise to find himself at the end of a chapter. He began to interject stories of his own life at moments in the text. He claimed to know about prisons; he was appalled at the food in the gulag. (William was the cook at the Del Norte camp.)

Jules said that reading meant knowing all the words.

William said he didn't have a vocabulary.

Proving that William and Jules could decipher did not go far, of course. Neither had any experience of extended reading and it had little value for them. Decipherment, as one might suspect, meant reading to them. But how had this happened and why the brutality? The meanness of reading and writing infected William and Jule's behavior noticeably. When Jule's secret reading ability was discovered, he bit out:

"I hate reading. This wastes my time."

He almost said, "I hate you."

William was hardly more subtle. When I brought him Ivan Denisovich William saw me from across the room:

"Get away from me with that book. I'm not going to read, I haven't read, and you can't make me. I came up here [to Del Norte] to get everything but this isn't the time and it isn't the place."

Later, slightly mollified, he wrote:

I have been go[ing] to body building every night for the past week, avoiding Elspeth as much as possible. On my day off I do my Best to do nothing . . . . I think this program is good thay should have this type of program in schools. As far as up here go, I[t's] a good thin to have If you have time and HAVE the motivation to stick with it. You might learn some thig but it's not helthy.

This wastes my time. It's not helthy. Reading and writing could not proceed until these realities were explained. What experiences accounted for them?

An early hypothesis I had was that special education was the culprit. Special education was something Jules and William had in common, though William's program had been more extensive. Jules attended Chapter One Reading, a federally funded remediation project. William had spent all of his schooling from the seventh grade through graduation in such a non-regular program. Enough of the ridiculous and authoritarian went on programmatically to ratify ineptitude and backwardness. One such suspect feature common to both programs was interminability. Students who got into special programs (and the entry requirements were not articulated) didn't know how to get out. Jules captured this one day when he informed me that the year before he had gotten out of Chapter One math. I asked him when he would get out of Chapter One reading.

"Ten-thirty."

"No, I mean when will you rejoin your regular reading class?"

"What?"

"When will you succeed, graduate from Chapter One?"

"I don't know. One day the teacher just tells you not to come back."

William professed a little more savvy about the procedure.

"What it is, they put you in there [special education] until you got up to the regular level with the rest of them. Then they moved you out, if you wanted. I never reached that high enough level. So I stayed in there."

There are other things which would suggest reasons for the repression of special education. Something in William's experience, however, cautions against a sweeping indictment of special education. William remembers the name of no teacher until the special education teacher. He stayed in her class for three years; it was the first stable schooling he had ever known. He contrasted the special class with a regular class in which a teacher "sat you down, put a bunch of shit on the board, and [gave] you a book." The special education teacher treated William carefully. She allowed him to build a private bamboo enclosure in the corner of the room, string up lights and a radio, and crawl inside when he wanted to study or be alone. It was a way William could cope with demands, noise, insecurity. In this sense, the class was special and not subject to oversimplification. The problem was other than a single teacher or a unique program. It was bigger than both of them and so it controlled both. I began to see that it was the definition of literacy in special education that did the damage.

Jule's sister had figured the problem out already. Jules brought to a meeting a favorite book, explicitly not a schoolbook. The subject was dinosaurs, a subject which enlivened Jules. Jules could read dinosaur with no hesitation. In the front of the book, the sister had written, "Jules doesn't like reading too much. But he likes exciting books on dinosaurs."

I asked Jules, "Why do you think we read books?"

"I don't know."

"What kind of reading do you like to do?"

"I hate reading."

"Do you hate books?"

"No. I hate reading."

"What is it like when you enjoy a book?"

"I don't know."

One time I had asked William how long he thought it would take for him to learn to read a book easily. He thought about it and said five or six years.

The day after Jules brought in the dinosaur book, I sat in the cafeteria where we met and watched other reading tutors with their charges. Jules was working with some photographs and the tape recorder. A tutor was holding up flashcards for a student whose head rested on the table. Flashcard. Flashcard. Flashcard. "T-h-r-o-u-g-h." What does it mean to a nonreader to see a flashcard that says through?

I hate reading. It's not helthy.

I asked Jules what he did in Chapter One Reading.

"Reading."

"What do you read about?"

"Well, not reading. Workbooks." We play games like vowel bingo, too."

What had William done? I played back a tape he had made, telling me about his school.

"With reading, instead of reading books and stuff, you had little stories, real short stories, and you just kind of answer questions. The teacher had a file [of stories] and as you went higher in the file they got a little bigger. And you have these little questions at the end."

William continued and said that to finish a story meant you were assigned a point. "And when you got to a certain number of points, you got a prize. Which was kind of fun." The prizes were candy or pens, or, if you were lucky, a lunch with the teacher, which, William said, "I always shot for."

Ideology is not jargon to failed readers. The damnation of the reading pedagogy William and Jules describe is that most readers overcome it, a circumstance whose political, social and psychological implications rarely invite debate. The standardized reading tests which all fourth graders will take in Jules' school, for example, consist of pages of syllabified words, underlined vowels and consonants, and stories whose four sentences are followed by four questions. According to these scores, the state will parcel out funds, and from these funds programs like Chapter One begin. Of course, to the students who begin Chapter One, and most students do not, to begin is to begin again. The title of the program is malign. Chapter One begins and ends at the same place. The procedure, in fact, hardly approaches chapter of anything. What constitutes Chapter One is the denigration of movement and meaning and reasoning. Instead, the emphasis on the minimum is redoubled: reduction resumed. There are more drills, more hyphenation, more fragmentation, more trivialization, more stories with questions with no answers except the right one. More vowel bingo.

Jules recounted on two occasions a story about a spelling test. A question admitted of two logical answers. Both of the answers were words on his spelling list. He told me the words, the rationale for the alternative explanations, the question. He put down both answers to ensure the outcome.

It is difficult even for a nine year old to be humiliated and not notice. Jules is not merely humiliated, however. Jules is trapped. The duplicity of decipherment is that to decipher only is only to be able to decipher. Decipherment is divorce; from the diminishment of the text to the diminshment of the person subjected to is short and systematic. Jules and William responded purposefully to the request for self-destruction. They refused.

The refusal was not particularly swift, but it gained intensity and form as the need to announce self-control and stature heightened. Il-literates, child or adult, do not surrender the purposes of communication when they spurn literacy. They find other spheres in which to speak and other sources of value by which to conform, sources which do not require the redoubling of a beginning. The transition is not simple, nd it does not imply facile notions of causation or separation. Whether or not illiterates participate in the culture of literacy, they exist with literates, and literates value the written word. Jules and William, therefore, knew that to find sanction for their lives they had to go elsewhere. At William's age, the places are easier to identify, as William's illiteracy takes on more ominous political and economic bite. William's career aspirations are severely limited, in spite of a number of skills. Those careers or jobs to which he has access often possess their own hazards. William already has a string of jobs behind him, mostly welding, about which he has almost a mystique of manual performance and deterioration of responsibility. He expects to be fired when he gets a job; so far, his expectations have been fulfilled. Jules, at nine, has chosen football. He describes the play-making, the physical contact, even the violence with relish. He shows up in the Fall before school officially opens to practice, and he stays two hours a day after school during the season. He says he likes to smash peoples faces; in the last game of the past season, he broke his foot.

The features and grounds of manual and physical labor and play are complicated and cultural in the United States. In schooling, there are not many other anti-literate outlets for behavior. Sports certainly qualify. In the job market, the lines are less clear, but manual, hard labor still sets itself off from literacy-based professionalism i.e., sitting at a desk. The C's advertises, for example, "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions." Certainly, it is the death of manual, blue-collar industry in this country that contributes substantially to current debates about literacy education.

There is another manifest aspect of Jules and William's choice, however, which may have more forceful consequences for their lives and the life of the society. That is the internalised distortions of communication rendered by the authoritarian trivialization of literacy to which they have been subjected. These are Jules and Williams' inutile, undeveloped strategies for dealing with ambiguous, often social-instructive, situations, especially situations which either explicitly involve literacy or, alternately, could be facilitated by literacy's involvement. This certainly characterized the interactions between Jules/William and me. One time after a grand display of bad boyism, Jules was rather put off guard when I asked if he thought I did not notice his behavior.

"No."

"What do you think I should do?"

"Make me behave."

"What if I don't?"

"I don't know."

Jules had a repetoire of behavior to elicit threats and get punished. The threats, at least temporarily, stopped the greater danger. Reading. Jules counted the sentences he was asked to read aloud. He would not go over five. I asked him what he did when he read something he didn't understand. "Ask the teacher." I nodded. He added, "Stop reading."

William never stopped demanding to know my motives. "Why are you doing this? I don't want to read books.

"Get away from me with that book."

William said, "Show me a job to do. That's how I learn. This exclamation characterizes the alternative occasion, too, the occasion when Jules or William was the teacher. William's style is impatience. An excellent motorcycle mechanic, William is often solicited to help with diagnosis and repair. He works well as long as his explanations are understood. If they are not, however, he is apt to yank out of the hands of the person he is helping the tool or the engine part, condemn the error of procedure, and demonstrate the proper technique. Jules' teaching mirrors the image. A tense moment occurred once when he presented the instructions he had written to another student for the operation of a tape recorder. Each instruction began, "Do X." When the student could not follow the instructions, Jules got angry and called the student an idiot.

I often wondered if William thought that he would learn to operate the *heavy equipment* he dreamed himself in charge of with an operator in the cab of a crane working on the 89th floor of a downtown building saying, "Now, do this." The scenario is oversimplified, but it is hardly less fantastic than pretending that one's life in western society can ignore literacy. Tacitly, William acknowledges the precariousness of this pretense. New engines, new innovations, ornery problems lead him to repair manuals which he peruses beginning with the pictures. He goes to the text only as a last resort. He claims that this isn't real literacy. To the extent that retrieving information is like vowel bingo, he is right.

I asked William if his motto was show-and-do, why it didn't work with reading. There was a long silence. Finally, he said that reading was different.

I asked Jules what he wanted to be. He said a Marine. He said he would *settle* for the Navy.

In this scenario, some lives, apparently can exist in terms of distance from literacy. You be literate, leave me alone. You be different and read; I'll be different and, as Jules said, "curl up with my face" on rainy days. Reading is for the other; unfortunately, the other defines the difference.

Until William and Jules discover the meaning of literacy they will live on its fringes. Literacy does not separate lives; literacy stabilizes the separation. What will happen to change this for William and Jules? How will they find out?

They may not. At twenty, William prefers not to think about the future. A month after the literacy project, he broke a rule and was fired from the CCC. He said he hated working in the rain, anyway.

Maybe he will find a way to learn to read and write. As he also said, there is a time and place.

Who would have thought that nine years old and the fourth grade weren't one of them.

Jules "regular" teacher said, "If I thought I could get a kid through this [standardized reading] test, I'd lie, cheat, steal, anything to do it." She doesn't need more opportunity for subterfuge, however. She needs a classroom which is not trivialized by the very concept she presumes to teach. By the end of the three weeks Jules and I spent together, Jules read the three and four page letters I wrote to him; as soon as he could read silently and not have to answer questions at the end, he read quickly and efficiently. I could tell if he understood because I had written the letters. His animosity for others weaknesses calmed, and he helped a student less able than he to figure out the student's garbled handwriting. One day, in the few minutes left of the meeting, I read out loud to Jules the beginning of Farenheit 451. I thought burning books would appeal to him. The first scene is filled with the flames of novel arson and expressions of Montag's satisfaction with his own handiwork. The bell for classes to change rang, Jules bolted out of his chair, and yelled back down the hall as he was running away, "That doesn't make any sense. Firefighters aren't supposed to start fires." Jules has plenty of fire, and reading is like water.

William wrote a final essay, with much begging from me, about the meaning of the four week literacy project. He asked if this project were the same as education. I said I hoped so. In part, he wrote: The sole purpose of future education is in my hopes is that people learn to doo a way with boms and to devoit more time in saving life then to destroing it . . . . The only think they [students] need to learn [is] to read & right. These are my points of viues of things I hop they are yours to.

There are many uses of literacy. One of them is to build the boms William hopes literacy can disassemble. Another use is William.

As long as William lives in a world that notices that he can't spell boms, William will be more likely to die from them. As Jules does not know but will find out, armies are made from the ranks of semi-literates rather than college graduates. In the meantime, as in the next weeks or months, what will happen to Jules and William?

Jules will take another standardized test; there are four during the year. On it, Jules will get some answers right, some wrong. He won't know which, because the only discussion of standardized tests is their directions. Because Jules is not totally illiterate or pathologically diagnosable (at least not yet), he will go on to the fifth grade. More to the point, the day after the test, he will go on as though it had not happened. Of course, to him, it may as well not have.

William will get a job or get welfare or go to jail or enroll in a community college. There aren't any institutions that look out for William anymore except after the fact. But this is the most arresting point.

It was the institutions designed to look out for William that enabled his poverty of opportunity. The schools placed a minimum value on William's potential; they made him functional, hence dispensable. The society that shifts from industry to information economies has limited need for William. Firing William is like promoting Jules. Except, of course, it isn't.

Doug Cazort's Literacy Journal

One of our primary research goals was to build a supply of observations, accounts, reactions, which would preserve at least some of the experience of the project. We had decided from the beginning that there would be no testing, no evaluation, no activity involving corpsmembers not at least intended entirely for their immediate benefits consequently there was some emphasis on thick descriptions by researchers and corpsmembers. Doug Cazort's literacy journal is a fascinating document by a gifted teacher. His students formed a gang of their own, recognizable as a group, mutually supportive of one another and of Cazort, also. Some of their stories follow his journal.

Literacy Journal

Doug Cazort

Teaching Adult Literacy--A Journal

Introduction

When I began teaching in USC's Model Literacy Project in the summer of 1983, I was no stranger to teaching composition at the university level. But my previous experience had not fully prepared me for several of the problems I was going to face.

First, I had to develop a course for a type of student I had never before worked with. I didn't know what kind of needs they would have, but I guessed that most of them would be dealing with some degree of writing anxiety as well as nervousness in their unfamiliar surroundings. So I planned to start them off dealing with their fears through performing such operations as free writing and dictating to themselves using tape cassettes. To a certain extent, this preconceived notion about their fears turned out to be fairly accurate, and this approach worked with most of them as a way of loosening them up and helping them reduce their reluctance to write.

But the real action in the class, the real problems, centered more on how we were going to get along with each other. The free writing probably did a lot to let them know something about me and the program they were getting into. My tolerance of their mistakes in the free writing and in their rough drafts probably introduced me to them as a person, not an "English teacher" who would make them feel illiterate and small by red-marking every other word they squeezed out on paper. So that helped us all off to a start.

And my greatest challenge of the summer came in the form of a young black man named Michael who could neither read nor write, but who had made it through the eleventh grade because of his fantastic skill at basketball. The challenge wasn't just in figuring out a way to teach him something in a few weeks that he hadn't learned to do in eleven years of school. His problem was intensified by the fact that he didn't want anyone to know about the fact that he couldn't write. He wouldn't try to read or write at the table where we worked with the other students, because they would then find out his secret. And he wouldn't go with me to work at another table, because then he thought the others would guess our reason for moving. So, whatever it was that had prevented his learning to read in the first place was now irrelevant. Now his shame at the fact that he couldn't read or write prevented his trying to learn.

After several days of encouragement, both from me and the program coordinator, Olga Connolly, Michael finally agreed to try to learn to read and write. Then I had the additional task of providing some kind of instruction. Here I was fortunate. My wife teaches in early childhood education, and through her, I had read of the concept of key words to reading and the language experience approach. So I simply started taking dictation from Michael, one sentence at a time ("I first started getting into trouble in the seventh grade"). I would print the words and leave enough space below each word for him to copy his. While he was copying, I would go work with someone else. Then I would return later to Michael and have him reread his sentence, and we would move to the next sentence in his story.

I don't know how well this worked, because soon after we started, Michael left the California Conservation Corps for a higher paying job as a plasterer's apprentice in the San Fernando Valley. He returned once several months later during one of his days off to tell me he was going to try to arrange his schedule so he could come to our class. But I never saw him again. Still, something he said that day gave me an idea of what could be accomplished in this kind of program, perhaps the most important thing to be accomplished. Michael told me that he still felt good about the writing we had done, and that he wanted to do some more. He felt he could learn to write now, and it was all due to me.

That made me uncomfortable, because I did not feel that I had taught Michael anything. Yet he told me this as if he were describing some magical transformation in his life. Now, after a year's experience teaching adult literacy, I realize that a magical transformation is exactly what he was describing, and that this transformation is the first requirement that many of the members of my group had to undergo before thay could accomplish anything as mundane as improving their skill at reading and writing.

The transformation I'm talking about involves a major change in the way they look at themselves. At some level, people who have not learned to read or write, or who have learned in some marginal way, think they cannot learn or perhaps even that they should not learn. One day in class, I actually heard one black CCC member tell another that the latter was willing to "betray our race" because he spoke "right" all the time, in other words, because he spoke Standard English. There are many opportunities for them to learn that they cannot learn literacy, opportunities in the home, in the schools, and with their peers who share and perpetuate their attitudes.

What is heartening is that when given the opportunity to change this part of their self-concept, many of them do. And then once they are convinced that they can learn these skills and that they have the right to, they go about learning them in the same way they learned to speak the variants of English or Spanish or Vietnamese they learned as children, simply by being exposed to their use in a way that allows them to acquire them as their own.

Frank Smith, in "Reading Like a Writer" Language Arts Vol. 60, No. 5, May 1983), describes this process as becoming a member of the club of readers and writers. It requires the same act of identification with other members of the club that is required before a person goes out for a soccer team or begins to dress punk or preppy or speaks the dialect of his school peers instead of that of his parents. And I saw not long after Michael's visit that my most important job would be facilitating this process among most of my students, regardless of what reading or writing operations I asked them to perform.

Once they made the identification with people who can read and write and who enjoy reading and writing, they would carry on by themselves even after they left the program. And if they did that, in whatever flawed manner they could manage at the time, they would have succeeded at the most important task I sould set for them. The rest they could learn without my help.

What I tried to do to facilitate their acts of identification is the story of the following journal. I doesn't record everything we did or expressed on any one day, nor does it record every single day we spent together, but it gives a good indication of what went on.

I tried to record the failures as well as the successes, but it wasn't always easy to judge which were which.

The people in my groups were full of surprises, easily teaching me as much as I taught them. I am going to miss them.

The Journal

These are some short biographies I took down from my first group in the summer of 1983:

Enrique was born in Guadalajara and lived there until he was five, when his family moved to Chicago. When he was fourteen, his family moved back to Guadalajara, where he attended high school and was influenced by a teacher who got him to read Hesse and Mann and to listen to Bach. Now he likes to read German literature on his own.

When he came back to the States (L.A.), he couldn't find a job. After looking for nine months, he saw a CCC ad on a bus ("Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions"), and he joined. He has gotten a lot of pride from being able to do the hard work.

David was born in LA and went through the eleventh grade at Chur High. He has worked at a cleaners and in a deli and gone to school at East LA College Trade Tech in automobile technology, learning to use computers for engine repair. Since he started working for the CCC, he has been doing auto body work on the side.

In the CCC, he has learned how to treat others with respect, and he has learned how to take responsibility. He wants to go back to Trade Tech to finish auto mechanic training.

Michael was born in San Antonio and came to LA after he got out of high school. It has been hard for him to get a job. The CCC provided one for the last ten months, but now he'll need one in two more months.

He told me privately that he doesn't know how to read or write at all, and he feels bad about his ignorance. He was passed through the eleventh grade because he was an excellent basketball player.

Gabriel was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. When he was one month old, his family moved to the States. He went to high school at South View High School. His senior year, he broke his ankle and took the rest of his senior year off. During that time he did part-time jobs.

He feels that the CCC teaches you a lot. He has been in ten months so far. Now he's going back to the CCC academy to undergo crew leader training. He wants to take more responsibility.

As far as writing goes, he has been working on a resume with Olga.

Charles was born in LA. He went as far as the twelth grade at Jefferson High, but he lacked the credits to graduate. He had a job at a liquor store for four years. He did everything there from sweeping out to running the cash register.

He next did concession work at Olympic Boxing and Wrestling.

He went to night school and worked. This didn't work out, so he joined the CCC. Here, he has learned not to procrastinate.

The first thing Tina has to say about herself is that she's tired. She is eighteen years old. She has always been an advanced student. She likes to move ahead. She skipped the fifth grade. She was a college prep student and had a scholarship. Her favorite subjects were black history and English, but she had a problem with the basics. She could write decent book reports.

Her favorite teacher was a Miss Stanzman who had degrees in Literature and writing. Someone from the CCC came to Miss Stanzman's class one day and made a presentation. Tina wanted a change of pace, so she joined up.

She likes the "Me" Series, the guest speakers. In September, she will go to Cal State Long Beach. She likes this USC program. It's good for the people in the CCC.

Tuesday, 13 September, 1983

Today was the start of fall classes. I now have Charles Enrique, Michael, Jose, Albert, and Herbert.

I told them in general what we'd be doing: writing in workshops, writing orally with cassettes, writing a play dealing with their goals in life and obstacles to achieving them, and reading and revising the play in order to put it on for the C's by Christmas.

Next we did free writing. One new member, Albert, wrote a short biography for me, and I wrote one for him. Then we tried the idea-generation technique of clustering, each of us writing ideas for our own plays. We read them to each other, and it turned out that the dramatic situation they all chose was their life in the CCC but each with a personal twist: gang problems, crew member/crew leader conflicts, personal goals like becoming a heavy equipment operator through CCC training, or just working out personal problems through CCC interaction.

After the hour, the instructors got together for a meeting, and I found I was feeling misgivings about this play orientation. But now I think it's the way to push on. They'll read, write, revise, interact, act, have some fun, talk about their own lives, dramatize their goals and give them concrete form. All this will lead to a positive experience with writing and to some carry over of literacy in their lives. It will. It will.

Albert, a crew leader, asked me if there will be time and instruction in more practical writing. I told him to ask me for help with anything he needs. He said he would.

Wednesday, 14 September, 1983

First we did free writing. Actually only Enrique does "pure" free writing. The others write about some specific problem that bothers them, or they write letters. But they all write, and timewise, all exceed what I would normally expect. Michael usually stops first, then Herb, then Charles, while Albert and Enrique keep on writing until I ask them to go on with something else. Jose wanted to keep on writing while we read the play. He was working on a letter to go along with Emily Hick's photo exhibit. So, he wrote.

We read parts from a rough screenplay of mine. They enjoyed it, laughing at the curse words and catching the intended humor as well.

We talked informally for a few run-over minutes about gangs and gang warfare. They are extremely animated and humorous about this deadly subject and very aware of the insanity of the whole affair and the ways they are locked into it.

We passed out the new, red, USC ring binders and pocket notebooks. Few took their pocket notebooks with them (Albert has a journal in his crew leader packet). It's as if they want to save them as precious gifts not to be soiled.

Thursday, 15 September, 1983

We wrote for thirty minutes on "An object or thing that is important to you," a topic provided by Lance Potter to generate writing samples from all the people. First I told them it wasn't a test, simply something to look at as a piece of writing they are doing for practice. Then, we'll do it again in December to have a piece of writing they're doing then. This is double talk to try to take their minds off the fact that it is a writing sample.

They said they weren't put off by it, although they would rather write about people than things. Enrique wrote the most, and it's practically a concrete manifestation of Steve Krashen's reading hypothesis for writing learning. He wrote a reading history, illustrating how books are important to him. It's romantic and impressive.

Charles wrote about a dream house he'd like to have someday, and even though the handwriting itself is almost unreadable, the set-up is imaginative and the description has some good detail. The handwriting gets more legible as he goes.

Michael also wrote about a dream object, the car he'd like to have, and it's interesting how he switches from the possible to the almost impossible in his dream.

Then, the three of us continued reading the screenplay. This reading hypothesis has me excited. I'd like to start the hooked-on-books work, but until then, the reading of the play looks good. They didn't want to stop when the time was up.

Tuesday, September 20, 1983

Olga asked me to remind my group that if they were fired from the CCC for absences, they would also be dropped from our program. She didn't tell me why she wanted me to tell them, but we guessed in our group it was because quite a few people have been missing work. Later, at an instructors meeting, we discussed this and decided that even if they are fired from the CCC, they'll be welcome here.

I asked the people who had missed last time (Herb and Jose) to do the piece of writing about something that's important to them. Either something they have or something they'd like to have.

While those two were writing, I asked Charles, Michael, and Enrique to brainstorm, cluster, and write ideas about the play they'd like to write, starting from a character and the situation they see him in.

Later, we all read on in "Reaching Out," a short screenplay I've been working on. I had some problems with Michael. He was reading one of the magazines someone had passed out this morning, and then when it came his turn to read, someone would have to tell him to read. I took his behaviour to mean that he wasn't interested in the screenplay, so I gave his part to someone who hasn't been able to read yet.

I told Michael he could go ahead and read the magazine, since that was a legitimate part of the course, and anyway, he had already read that part last Thursday. Evidently I was wrong about his lack of interest. Reassigning his part put him on the defensive: "I was just reading during the parts when I had to wait."

I ended up feeling like I had lost him. For the rest of the class, he neither read along with us, nor did he read his magazine. He stared off at the other groups, and as he was walking out, when Enrique tried to kid with him, Michael scowled and shook him off.

This presents the kind of problem that I don't like to deal with. But I will have to deal with it, because this is where I think we fail or succeed, in the relationships we have with them.

After class, I read the play ideas and was really impressed with Charles' idea about "Mr. Tear Drop." Mr. Tear Drop is the leader of a gang called the Tear Drops, and in a few sentences, Charles set the scene for a dramatic conflict. I wouldn't be surprised to see this become the core of our play. It could also be a segment of the play, concerning one of the gangs that will compete with another gang that someone else will create.

Wednesday, 21 September, 1983

An amazing thing happened today. I was worried after yersterday's interplay with Michael and also feeling that somehow the sessions were becoming routine. So I decided to try to open up, to try to shake things up. I brought the hooked-on-books box and didn't plan to have them read the screenplay, unless they asked to.

Somehow, they sensed something was going on with me and responded with a "rap session" directed at me and what we need to do.

"What's going on, Douglas?" Charles said, "Something happening in your life?"

"Maybe you didn't get any last night," Jose said, and they all laughed.

"That's true," Charles said, "Sometimes that's the problem. You used to come in and say, 'Do this. We're gonna do that. What you want to do?' Now you give us assignments to write. Sometimes I've got too much on my mind. I need to write that out first."

"I don't know, man," Herb said, "I just hate to write."

At first, the attention made me a little skittish, but then I got a surge of pleasure that they were taking over, taking responsibility for their life in this class.

Jose said he'd like to bring in newspapers and read them, then write about what they read. "I can bring enough for everybody," he said, "cause when I put in that quarter, I take three or four."

I agreed to go whichever way their needs and wants take us. I'm not the "teacher." I told them that this summer, but that's still hard for us all to believe.

After the rap session was over, I broke out the box of books and they went through them. I gave each one a stack of five or six and then kept piling them on until I ran out. They really got absorbed in them. Then while the others were reading, I took Jose aside and talked to him about his writing. He has been working on a piece about his goals.

Before I had a chance to say anything, he started asking if I was going to tell him what he did wrong: spelling, commas, etc. "I know it's not very good," he said.

I told him I wasn't looking for mistakes, that I was impressed with the way he writes about goals, and that many people you read about who "succeed" have set goals and written about them in order to help keep the image of their goals in mind. I also said I appreciated what he had written about planning to work as hard as he could in here because he could see that I was working hard for them. Its strange to see that, because this doesn't feel like hard work.

I talked to Charles and said I liked his play idea about "Mr. Tear Drop." I also thanked Charles for his remarks this morning during the rap session. He said he did it because he cares, "And too few people care."

Everyone but Jose took at least one book home. Charles took five.

Late entries: Jose, in the rap session, said he'd like to have a "magic" or "mad" moment every day, a session to start us off during which we tell what's going on with us.

He and Charles each told me in conference that they used to hate writing, but now they're starting to write on their own.

Michael didn't want to sit by Jose. Charles told me they don't get along.

The "tears" motif also showed up in the play ideas Jose brainstormed.

Thursday, September 22, 1983

First they free-wrote, and so did I. Michael read his book from the hooked-on-books box, a book about an inner-city basketball team. The title of the book is Hoops. I didn't say anything about his reading instead of writing. Whatever turns him on to literacy is what I'll go with.

Later in the hour, I worked with Jose and Michael on job application forms. I advised them to xerox copies of the final versions and keep them for help when making future applications. I asked each one of them to emphasize strengths applicable to each job and appropriate training they have received from the CCC. Jose wants a fire-fighting job, Michael a clerical position.

I also suggested some application tricks: xeroxing the blank form so they have a rough draft to work with, and doing hand written rough drafts of any essay sections before putting them on the forms. Anything to take some of the fear of making mistakes off the initial writing.

I gave them copies of Leroi Jones' play, The Toilet. They discussed the parts that each would take, arguing for the most macho parts in a good natured way. Some took the plays home.

Charles says he and his wife are enjoying the books he took home. Enrique returned Steinbeck's Pearl today after reading it in one night.

Tuesday, September 27, 1983

We did free writing for about fifteen minutes. I noticed that Herb was still stopping and erasing just about every third word, so, on impulse I said, "Herb, no corrections with free writing," and we both laughed. Afterward, I asked him how it had gone without correcting, and he said the ideas came more easily.

Albert also said his ideas are starting to come more easily. I read what he had written about problems he's having with his girlfriend, the same problems he had with his last girlfriend, the mother of his daughter. He wrote that when he's down, what really helps him is his relationship with his little girl. I told him that's the way I feel about my son. Regardless of how your life is going, or how bad you feel about yourself, you're still Daddy to them, and that's a form of consolation.

We chose parts and began to read The Toilet. They chose two parts each, and I was impressed with the way they worked it out. Especially Albert, who is a crew leader. He could have tried to pull rank, but instead he asked each person what parts he wanted, and then he chose two parts for himself.

As usual, when we read the curse words, they laughed a lot, but they did get into the story and seemed to enjoy it.

Wednesday, September 28, 1983

Albert, Charles, and Herb did free writing in the writing center while I set us up to do oral composing in the language lab. In the lab, I asked them to list what they might like to write about (using deferred judgement listing). Then, when they found a subject they could talk about for several minutes, I asked them to record what they had to say, imagining that they were talking to a real person.

I asked them to do this to experiment with a method that might help them get their ideas down without worrying about correctness. Herb seemed a little reluctant to try it, so I talked to him. His first response was, "What are we supposed to write about?" He seems to be operating completely on the teacher-student model: he is supposed to write about what I want him to. I told him again that he can write about anything, but of course that is a big order for some people, and I know that. I suggested he could write about his problems, or he could write a letter to a friend. Just list some ideas and then talk about anything that appealed to him. He could write another letter to his friend in Oregon. He got started.

At the end of the hour, I asked them how it worked, but we only had time for Albert to tell me. He said his ideas could flow more easily, and he didn't feel that he was losing ideas that he had while writing. Now he could get his ideas on tape just about as fast as he could think them.

We will continue this tomorrow.

Thursday, September 29, 1983

I was ten minutes late today, and I didn't wear the CCC shirt they gave me a few days ago. Today's the first day I haven't worn it over whatever shirt I'm wearing. Jose "docked" me for not wearing the shirt, and if I were in the CCC's, that would mean I would lose part of a day's pay.

Jose came in even later than I did, complaining about being down in the other classroom waiting on us. In general he was very hyper this morning.

We went to a different language lab today, one where regular USC students were working. Jose and Herb sat in booths next to each other, and started off by trading headphones and listening to each other's tapes. They laughed a lot, and Jose kept up a steady chatter. Once he saw a female student walk in, and he called out to her, "Hey, Sugar. Hey, Sugar," not loudly, but loud enough for her to hear.

What did I feel about it, do about it? I didn't like it, but I gave them their rein, trying to see if they would finally settle down without having to draw some teacherly behaviour out of me. They didn't settle down, so I told them to come back to the writing center with me. Albert was into the recording and writing, so when I decided to take the others back, he said he'd like to stay and finish.

Back in the writing center, I told Jose what was happening with me. He said he didn't like being in the new lab. Also, it didn't feel right today with so many of the other people away with their crews doing flood control work at the Colorado River. And finally, he said he was excited because tomorrow was Friday and payday. I said all those were legitimate feelings. All he had to do was tell me about them. He agreed to in the future.

What I want to do in the future is to confront what's going on before it gets so far along. Right when it starts happening, ask them what's on their minds. If they say "nothing," tell them that I'm feeling something, and I may be wrong. So if I'm wrong, tell me what's really going on.

My main point was that they have the right to tell me when they don't feel like doing what I suggest. But when they go along and resist in nonverbal ways, they put us back into the old teacher/ student role in its worst sense: "I'll do this because Douglas says to, but I don't want to."

I pointed out to Jose that he had suggested last week starting every day with a rap session, telling each other "where we're at," and that's what I'd like from him when's something's not right for him.

He said OK and told me that he'd like to write now, something about the Dodger's fight for first place in the western division. I said that was fine with me, and he began to write, saying, "This is free writing." What he actually wrote about was why he was feeling weird today.

I dealt with Herb separately. Herb wears am emotional mask when we talk, and I can't tell what he really wants or needs and whether or not he's getting it. He wrote one day that he wants to improve his writing skills. I have to find out what he means by that. I would guess he means surface errors. He also says he hates to write. Some possible ways I could go with Herb: Encourage him to read at home. Give him more structured assignments since he doesn't feel comfortable choosing his own. Let him find his own way.

For Michael: Order the complete series of the sports books. Ask him to read aloud sometime.

For them all: Bring copies of Writing, a short collection of writing tricks of the trade I've compiled. Start them writing articles for the international group's newspaper. Start writing the play.

Tuesday, October 4, 1983

Today I wanted to shift gears and work on opening up and getting them to open up about what they want from this program. I went back over the available alternatives we've set up so far: They can read anything they want--the sports page is fine. They can read newspapers and write about what they read (This was Jose's suggestion, and since then, I have brought an LA Times and a USA Today every day). They can write their plays. They can write articles for the newspaper. They can write about their problems.

As far as my goals go, I told them I want to be here for them in whatever way helps each one. I said I know it's not really the case, but I feel like I have failed when they're not getting what they need from the program.

Then I went back over what I have said about staying open with each other. If something's not working for them, they need to tell me, not resent it in silence.

We got one new student, Eric, who is one of the non-CCC students from the continuation high school. He introduced himself to us, and then we went around the table and introduced ourselves to him. Whenever one of them would give this program a plug, I would feel good.

Eric stayed late and wrote about his background in life and writing (what he wrote follows). Then I got the hooked-on-books box and let him choose some to take home.

They all wrote something about their goals in this program. Albert and Jose's statements follow Eric's. I have reproduced them as they wrote them, without editing out mistakes.

Eric

As you know my name is Eric. I was born in Dallas and we moved to New York. I was about 3 years of age. And then we move back to Dallas I was seven years old and we stayed there until I was forteen, and we move to L.A. I never liked school because I didn't know how to do the work in class. I never did ask the teacher for help. I guess I was ashame to ask. I made straight fails all throug school until we move to L.A. I went to school at Bethune jr high in the ninth grade I made satisfactory grade. I bacame concern about my grades and future. And I wen't to class even though I didn't wan't to. When we moved to L.a. I stoped most of the bad things. I think that the violence kept me in the house most of the time. it was different from Dallas. Right know Im forty credit short of a dimploma. I started to mesup in the tenth grade. I stayed back. I was supose to wen't to summer school. I didn't go I went to Washington D.C., intead. I wen't to shool out there untile January And moved back to L.A do to diffuculty and wen't to John hope High it was a contination high school. I did not attend very long, becaus of family problems And I returned to school to make up them credits and to learn more of something I hardly know about thing in hormony with school work.

Albert

There could be a numerous amount things are exspectation out of this program but the most important things to me is to inbetter my writing skills, to be able to comprehension skills, My reading habits needs improving, my spelling as you can see needs improving and also to define more vocabullary withen my head. All of these different topics is important to me simply because I can write more articles and maybe make this a career.

Jose

I like the way were going right now. I have know complains about the work were doing now. So its cool with me homeboy. Ill do what ever you want me to do.

I just want you to no that what ever we do im learning. You no im reading more than I use to. So with me im doing O-K just fine.

Wednesday, 5 October, 1983

At first today, I only had three people, Albert, Herb, and Enrique. Enrique was interested in reading _Born on the Fourth of July,_ so that's what he did today.

Herb got a _Guth Workbook_ and started working on the first exercises. While I was starting Herb on the _Guth,_ Albert had picked up the copy of Strong's _Sentence Combining_ I had been looking over, so I asked him if he wanted to try some of the exercises. He wanted to, so I went over some with him and then left him on his own.

Eric came in at 8:40. I got him to try free writing. Yesterday, I told him that I'm not going to be his teacher in the sense he's accustomed to, so he'll have to get used to producing on his own. This goes for the time he gets here, too. I leave at

9:00, so the later he gets here, the less he'll see of me. In other words (I told him), I won't be exerting any pressure on him to be on time. I said it's like this: He has an opportunity here, and it's up to him how much of it he wants to take advantage of. I hope this will get him to take responsibility off of me as an authority figure and see that whatever he is going to take away from this program is up to him.

Herb seems to enjoy the fill-in-the-blanks approach of the workbook. Maybe it gives him security. So, even though I don't think it's that worthwhile, it fills a perceived need of his, and that's important.

Thursday, October 6, 1983

Today was fairly wide open. I talked to each one about what he wanted to do next. Eric didn't show up.

Albert wanted to continue a story he started for Judith Rodby's newspaper, a story about a girlfriend of his who was with James Jones at Jonestown and escaped with Jones' son befoore the massacre. He went to work on it in the language lab, recording it first.

Michael also wanted to work in the lab, on a piece about his last experience on spike with the CCC.

Charles wanted to see the hooked-on-books box. When I got it out, Michael wanted to look through it too. He found a book on basketball, Hoops, and when Herb saw the cover, he wanted that one too.

I got the great athlete series and gave it to Herb to pick one. He found one he liked and began to read it.

Enrique brainstormed about his life goals for a possible essay that he wants to write, something substantial he can show his parents.

After class we had a staff meeting, and Mr. Aguilar of the Continuation High School talked to us. He stressed the importance of setting individual goals for each student, an attainable goal for each one, not one they can fail easily. In his school, when students complete a piece of work, they do not fail, regardless of the quality of the work. If it's unacceptable, they work on it until it is at least "D" work. No one fails who does the work.

He emphasized taking them off the street, speaking Standard English, modeling the world they've been excluded from, especially through introducing them to literature.

I felt talked down to during some of his remarks. It was as if he were speaking to new teachers at his school, telling them where to go from square one. I guess it's a common failing of teachers always to want to teach their audience.

Tuesday, Occtober 11, 1983

I got a surprise from Herb today. So far he hasn't caught fire on free writing, oral composing, or dictation, so I tried just giving him something to read, a book from the great athlete series, and lately that's what he's been doing. But today after he had been reading for about half an hour, he took out a piece of paper and began to write. I'll check tomorrow to see what he wrote.

Enrique wanted to do some goal setting, so I suggested a couple of exercises from Lakein's How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life. First I asked him to write what he'd do if he knew he were going to die tomorrow. Next, he will work on a six month death, then two years. In the way that Dr. Johnson said the prospect of being hanged concentrates a man's mind wonderfully, these exercises can help you rexamine your priorities.

I didn't have to get Michael to read today. He was already reading on his own when I walked in, finishing up his basketball book, Hoops. Letting them read whenever they want seems to be working. In the first place, if the Krashen Reading Hypothesis works, they are actually learning to write more efficiently by reading. Second, if they get turned on enough to continue reading after they finish this program, then they have really succeeded.

And there's something else about the reading. It may be a good warm-up for writing, a better one than free writing or clustering. Seeing Herb write today after he had read for a while reminded me that I work that way at times when I don't feel like writing. If I read first, ideas start to come without my asking for them. And that reminds me of something I read by Charles Lamb to the effect that books and hikes did his thinking for him. He couldn't think unless he read or walked.

Wednesday, October 12, 1983

Enrique kept on writing the exercises from Lakein's book and then read further in it.

Albert worked on his Jonestown paper.

Michael finished reading Hoops.

Herb read one of the athlete books.

Charles went with John Edlund, another instructor, to work on a resume.

Jose wrote a letter to his friend in Folsum Prison (in for armed robbery), and I read it.

I asked Herb if I could read what he wrote yesterday. It was a paragraph about our program here. He wrote that he likes it and that he is writing some on his own now. Before, he hated writing, but now he even writes sometime while he's watching TV. Also, during the afternoon journal writing sessions at the CCC center, he feels more like writing.

That surprised me. Herb's so quiet, I never know what he's thinking or how he's reacting, and I'm never sure of his answers even when I ask him. But this was written spontaneously, and it has the ring of truth to it.

I felt some frustration today at the unannounced change of plans necessitated by a visit from some people from CCC headquarters in Sacramento. We had been scheduled to see a Video written by one of our instructors, Rick Hadley, and shown on the cable TV series, "Against All Odds." But since the people from Sacramento were here, we had to be doing what were normally doing so they could observe. I don't really mind that; I just don't like to spring things on my students.

Thursday, October 13, 1983

We saw Rick's video today, a show on the lives of Charles Lindberg and Paul Robeson. I really enjoyed it, feeling the usual anger and paranoia I do when it covered the McCarthy era.

When we discussed it in our group, they focused on the KKK and racism. Jose told a story about a white man who pulled up in a truck at a corner where some of Jose's friends were standing. He drew a pistol and started shooting at Jose's friends. One of them ran to his place and got a "shooter" (rifle) and came back returning fire, and the white guy split.

This brought up an argument about what to do in a situation like that. Jose and Herb were for response in kind. Enrique was for a kind of Ghandian-Martin Luther King non-violence. Albert was in between, Michael silent. Jose and Herb got angry and walked out. It was time to go, anyway, so everyone followed.

The styles of arguing were interesting. Herb and Jose used the "What would you do if it happened to you?" argument and were incensed that Enrique wouldn't have shot back. Enrique used idealist, pacifist arguments that the others found ridiculously impractical and even unmanly.

Tuesday, October 18, 1983

Charles was back today, and we finally read Leroi Jones' The Toilet from start to finish. They all enjoyed reading it, and I got a picture of how each one reads in public or in front of his peers. Each has read aloud to me individually before, but it was interesting to hear them in comparison to each other.

Enrique is quite a reader and read the stage directions and two parts. Jose had no problems and read the tough guy parts right in character, as that is his normal character. Michael is a competent reader and likes to act. Herb has problems, but I don't know if they stem from nervousness or real reading problems. Charles actually misreads but manages to get the sense.

It was good we had the play to read. It helped Jose settle down after a run-in he had with a USC student. When we first came into the writing center, a regular Freshman Writing instructor had a group of students at "our" table. Evidently, he has been using the center from seven to eight a.m., before we arrive. He said he was taking them out, but he left for a minute, and we stood around waiting. I was irritated myself, and Jose said, stone faced, "That's our table." I told him they were leaving.

The instructor came back and told them where to go. Then he left again. The students weren't sure if he meant all of them or just the one guy he was looking at when he spoke. I told them he meant all of them.

The last one to leave, a young woman, slammed her books together and started out. Then she stopped and turned back toward Jose and said, "Fuck you," in a loud voice.

We we're stunned, and of course Jose, the gang leader, wanted to go after her. The instructor came in and asked what had happened. The student had told him that Jose had said something like, "I want to love you all day and all night and all day." Normally, I wouldn't have been surprised if Jose had said that, but I was standing right next to him, and I hadn't heard him say anything except, "That's our table."

Anyway, after we got into the play, everyone relaxed and forgot about the incident, and later, the other instructor and I had a talk and agreed it would be better if he could get his students out before we came in.

Thursday, October 20, 1983

Eric didn't show again today. I've got to find out if he has a phone.

First I asked them to write down their magazine preferences so we can order a collection for them to take to read on their vans.

Charles went with John Edlund to finish his resume.

Jose worked on his story for Judith Rodby's group newspaper.

Enrique is working through the operations in Writing ("Free Writing," "Getting Started," "Help From Creative Problem Solving").

Albert worked on his Jonestown story.

Herb got the athlete books and the Roger Staubach autobiography.

For Michael I wanted the books box, but since last night when Lance put it up, it has disappeared. I tried some other reading material on Michael, a collection of autobiographical essays.

Jose and I worked at a neighboring desk and revised the first half of his story. I was impressed with a couple of things he did. First, he made substantive revisions, not just surface corrections. And then I was especially impressed with the changes he made in response to his knowledge of the change in audience. I was his first audience. His fellow workers in the CCC, who will all get a copy of the newspaper, will be his second.

Jose suggested amplifying and explaining certain situations that he had explained in our conferences but that an absent audience would need more information to understand. He dictated some changes to me, and I took them down on a separate page. After he got the rhythm of this, I suggested that he carry on by himself. He liked the idea. Before I went back to the others, I spent a couple of minutes telling Jose the ways I'm pleased with his progress.

Meanwhile, back at the table, Michael had never quieted down. Harry Truman's autobiography didn't do the trick, after all. So when I went back, I talked to Michael and Herb about what to do when they don't want to do anything. I suggested that they just accept it and leave the table. I can let them in the lab next door, and they can shoot the bull with each other for an hour. And honestly, that's OK with me. Of course I'd rather see them get into something in here, but it's their time to do with what they will. What's not OK with me is when Michael stays at the table and distracts the others. It's their opportunity to use any way they want, but I don't want to see them using up someone else's opportunity. I know this is basic stuff, but once they start to act from this motivation on their own, we will have something.

They seem to accept this. The thing for me to do is to always have something extra for them to fall back on (newspapers, books). Also, I need to talk to anyone who's not settling in and find out what is going on. Then if need be, give them the option of leaving the room and taking a break if they won't take the initiative themselves.

Tuesday, October 25, 1983

I talked just for a minute about the Rodby group's newspaper and how we can write for it. Michael and Herb got into a discussion about sports, so I asked Michael if he wanted to write his sports predictions for the paper.

Michael worked on sports predictions for the paper. We revised it together, and he says he will type it.

Enrique read Hesse's Magister Ludi. He wanted to try to finish it, and he did.

Jose worked on revising his story for the paper. Then he read his additions out loud to me.

Albert worked on his Jonestown story as an article for the paper.

Herb read the newspaper, then Roger Staubach's autobiography.

Charles read the sports page and then read a little in Flags, a short novel I wrote about Vietnam. I talked to him about starting on "Mr. Tear Drop," and he said he would, but he never got started. Instead, he read.

Eric didn't show today.

Over the weekend, I was thinking about the group newspaper and the possibilities it offers. What really caused me to think about it was watching Jose revise last week the autobiographical story he had written first for me. Without any coaching, he was making changes since he knew it was going to be read by a different audience. He didn't put it in those terms, but that's what he was doing. That's a sophisticated approach to revision.

The writing they will do for the paper is going to be read somewhere by someone; it's not written in a vacuum for a teacher. And the paper will offer a wide range of writing: autobiography, sports, poetry, how-to, editorial opinion, letters to the editor straight reports, interviews.

I'm thinking about trying to work some type of newspaper in the next time I teach a regular freshman comp class. It gives the student the opportunity to write for a real audience and to feel the need to take writing through different stages: rough draft, revisions, and final edited form.

By some coincidence, the paper came out today before the end of class, and my guys went for it. There's a section with interviews of quite a few of the Corpsmembers, and most of my people were in it. The howled at the interviews and kidded each other. This has increased their enthusiasm for writing for the paper.

Wednesday, October 26, 1983

Jose kept writing on his "turnaround" story. Then he read the whole thing to me and said, "Now it's time for corrections." He wanted me to work with him. I said I would after he went through it first on his own.

"That's what you're supposed to be teaching me," he said, but he agreed that he'd get more out of it if he tried it first.

Albert read his Jonestown story to me. As he read, he underlined words he wanted to look up later. He caught all the first draft difficulties himself and almost all of the words he needed to look up. He asked when to use "a" or "an," and I gave him a general rule of thumb to use when editing. Then he started final rewriting, looking up words as he went.

I gave Charles 24 Favorite One Act Plays and asked him to read around in Miller's play and O'Neil's Moon of the Carribees to see what he'd like for us to read as a group. I'll xerox enough copies for us all.

For Enrique, I brought _Modern American Prose,_ a reader with short, non-fiction pieces by Lewis Thomas, Ellen Goodman, Edward Hoagland, Tom Wolfe, John McFee, Joan Didion, etc. I suggested he start with Ellen Goodman's pieces from her column in _The Boston Globe_ to see if he likes reading this kind of stuff. If he does, he could use it as a model for something he could write for the newspaper. He read the Goodman stuff and liked it. He also read the questions at the end of the pieces and said they gave him something to think about. Those questions have always distracted me, but since he likes them, I won't discourage him from reading them.

Herb settled in quickly with Staubach's autobiography. I noticed he was reading at the end of the book, so when the hour was up, I asked him what he was reading. He showed me the last section, entitled "Vignettes," and the one he was reading, about Staubach's relationship with Tex Schram, the Dallas owner.

I asked him if he just skipped around and found something that caught his interest, and he said yes. I let him know that was OK with me. Whatever hooks him on reading is fine with me.

Eric wasn't here today. I talked to Olga, and she's going to send him a note.

Michael wasn't here today, either.

The session felt very good to me today with everyone reading or writing, and I couldn't help thinking that a large part of the success was due to Michael's absence. He has such a hard time settling down, and when he can't, his remarks distract the others.

When he is working, things go all right if everyone has something to do that interests them. That's my job, to stay one step ahead with alternatives for each one to choose from, and to keep Michael from turning this into a bull session without turning him off.

Thursday, October 27, 1983

Much of what they did today was a continuation of what they were doing yesterday.

Charles read on in 24 Favorite One Act Plays and then put it aside for one of the National Geographics I brought in.

Albert continued working on the final draft of his Jonestown story for the newspaper.

Enrique read on in Modern American Prose.

Herb did something new. In the hubbub of the first few minutes, I heard him say to himself, "I'm going to write something today." He took his notebook and sat leaning over it for a couple of minutes. Then he started writing. I noticed that he still corrects some as he goes along, but that doesn't seem to keep him from getting his ideas down.

For Jose, I brought the two Vietnam oral histories, Nam and Everything We Had.

He asked which was best, and after I described how each was structured, he picked Everything We Had. He also checked out a sports book from the hooked-on-books box. On the back cover, there was a photo of two boxers that caught his eye. That reminded me of a note I wrote myself yesterday to get him something to read on boxing. I told him, and he asked me to get something on Roberto Durand. He and his brother (also an aspiring boxer) follow Durand.

I offered Michael Nam, but he didn't seem interested. I also had the book box out, but he wasn't going for it. Earlier, Albert had told me that Michael was angry about some hassle at work, and he did seem angry or depressed.

Then Enrique rummaged in the book box and came out with a sports book and without speaking, handed it to Michael. Michael took it and began to read, also without speaking. Then about halfway through the hour, he left our table and went over to a carrel to read.

I looked over there a couple of times, and he was leaning up against the partition with his back to me, so I thought he might be sleeping. I went over to talk to him and had to wake him up. It turns out he was docked a day's pay because Lisa (a supervisor) said he called in sick yesterday fifteen minutes late. With these students, I get a much better picture of how their lives affect their ability to learn. With the regular USC students, I rarely get the insight into their lives.

Today I'm having misgivings about the way things are going, because of a discussion we had yesterday in the Freshman Writing Advisory Council meeting. It concerned the Krashen Hypothesis and the implications it has for teaching composition, and it gives me second thoughts about what I'm doing with the CCC's, especially concerning my use of reading. One of the things that bothers me is the way I get Michael settled down with a book. It makes me think of using drugs in schools to calm hyperactive children. Still, it is reading, not a drug.

Composition as a discipline is up for grabs, so it's tempting for me to grab at anything that offers certainty or security, even grammar workbooks or sentence combining (and the Krashen Hypothesis). Any answers that do come seem to have more to do with the interaction between the learner and the teacher than with the material.

Tuesday, November 1, 1983

Several people had trouble settling down today, Michael and Jose especially. But then Michael asked for some help with a letter he is writing to a girlfriend, and Jose got interested in writing for the newspaper after some people from Judith's group came to interview our group.

Herb read in Staubach's book and then answered the questions the interviewers asked (What's your favorite food?)

Albert worked on his Jonestown piece, adding some material that he had inadvertantly dropped between the first and second drafts.

Enrique read in Modern American Prose.

Charles started writing ideas for his play, "Mr. Teardrop."

While they were writing, both Michael and Charles had times of blocking due to concern over style or word choice. Michael wanted a synonym for "need," and Charles was stuck on how to say "make it big" in a more formal way.

I suggested that they try to get their ideas down before they worry so much about style. Charles tried it and said he was getting more ideas, but I don't know if this had any effect on Michael.

Wednesday, November 2, 1983

Today I only had two of my people, Charles and Michael. The rest were with their crews at the Huntington, passing out flyers about the spraying for the fruit fly.

Charles continued working on his play, "Mr. Teardrop." I showed him the prewriting I've been doing for a screenplay and suggested he try something similar. He could write rough lists of characters and ideas, of his main character's goals and the obstacles to his achieving them. Then a rough list of scenes, and finally he could start on the play.

I notice he's hung up on form, more worried about how to do this than he is absorbed in getting ideas for scenes or action. If he continues this way, I'm going to ask him to try composing this orally on tape first. He could even try composing the action as he goes, off the top of his head.

Michael got interested in what Charles was doing and now wants to work on a play about a basketball hero. He also said that whenever we do Charles' play, he wants to play the role of whichever guy is the toughest. Before this though, I had asked Michael to write his goals for this program, because in looking through their goal statements, I hadn't found one for him.

He found it hard to get started, talking to Charles about Charles' play, so I asked him to come around and sit on my left. Charles was on my right, and Michael had been sitting across the table from him.

Then I talked Michael through his goal statement with questions, and it turned out that he feels the need to write more, even though he passes up the opportunity on his own. I asked him to free write, and he did until the hour was up, a piece about a girl he is interested in, the same girl he was writing a letter to yesterday. Michael needs more direction, but in the form of individual attention, not disciplinary action. Without that interaction with a person, what we're doing lacks an intrinsic attraction for him.

After yesterday, with its high degree of talking and excitement, I was trying to think of what I could do today about getting them back "on track," or if indeed, I needed to. I had thought about asking them to reasses their goals statements, and that's how I found out that Michael hadn't written one.

But seeing what happened today when I worked more one-on-one gives me some hope that more attention will help, especially at the times when someone is starting a project and is uncertain about where to go. Also, I think the goal-setting is helpful in bringing forward their own images of where they need to go and what they are here for.

I have also noticed that when Michael and Jose want to write seriously, they go to a table or desk and write alone (Jose even hunches over his paper so no one can read over his shoulder). So I'll follow their leads and set them up separate from the others. Every person probably won't need a new set up every day, just the ones who are in the early stages of a project.

Thursday, November 3, 1983

Today was pretty much the same as yesterday, but Charles was gone today as well, so I only had Michael. He had typed up his sports predictions for the paper, so I looked it over for typos. There were quite a few, so I talked to him about some final editing practices (let a friend read it, you read it backward), and he decided to retype the piece before giving it to the paper.

He also said he wanted to do more free writing. After his experience yesterday, he says he likes it again. But for the remainder of the class, we watched another of Rick Hadley's cable TV videos, this one on Andrew Carnegie and Woody Guthrie.

Tuesday, November 8, 1983

First I handed out the goal statements everyone wrote Oct. 4, and I asked them to read them and see if they are getting what they want. If not, I suggested that they write something to that effect, and if their goals have changed since then, I asked them to write new statements.

Before they wrote, I gave them the typed final version of Jose's article for the newspaper (I typed it up last night). While they read it, they were extremely quiet and absorbed. Then Michael commented that Jose "really has it up here, after all."

"That's right," Jose said, "I've got it, but I don't show it." It was moving to me to see how impressed they were and how moved Jose was by their reactions. I think it will result in motivation for the others.

Herb added to his goal statement, and it seemed he was writing more fluently, with fewer pauses and corrections. He reports writing more and more at home and even writing with his girlfriend, which makes writing easier for him.

Charles wrote that it's hard for him even to write about his goals because of his spelling problems, and I have noticed lately how blocked he is out of a reluctance to make mistakes.

Albert reiterated his need to improve his writing skills, and now he also wants to get more involved in writing articles.

Jose was feeling good after seeing his article typed up and hearing the response from the others, so he expressed his pride in himself and his gratitude toward the program. He reported reading and writing a whole lot more than he has since he dropped out of school.

Enrique wrote a rather rhapsodic piece in which he described his progress in self awarness and his strong urge to write.

Jose Manuel Enciso, Jr.

Hi, my name is Jose Manuel Enciso, Jr. I'm eighteen years of age, and I was born and raised in East L.A. in a place called Pico Gardens. It's a place that people so call "The Ghetto," but to me it's a neighborhood where most of the people take care of each other. In this story, I want to talk about how the California Conservation Corps helped me improve my life.

I mainly want to talk about how I was before and how I am now. Before I heard about the CCC, I was just a crazy vato who always liked to be in the streets having a good time. What I mean by having a good time is I always liked getting high, going out gang-banging, ripping off, meeting rucas, and getting high. My homeboys called me, "El Crazy Boxer," becaue I always did crazy things. For instance, I always got into fights, got kicked in and out of schools, and always got busted by the black and whites. I could never really make it anywhere. I even lost a lot of jobs.

One day, two carloads of my homeboys picked me up. We were all dressed up, ready to hit a party. We got to the party, and there were vatos from different neighborhoods there, and lots of rucas.

We started drinking, smoking, dancing, and just having a hell of a good time. A couple of hours later, some shit broke out with my homeboys and the guys from another neighborhood. They started fighting over some girls. All of a sudden I got involved with it. Then more and more homeboys jumped in.

It turned out to be something big. We were going head on for at least ten to fifteen minutes. During the fight, I was real close to getting stabbed. But this big black dude got there right on time; he got the two dudes that were on me. He threw one on the ground and managed to take the knife away from the other one.

Well, I was glad when that night was over. When I got up the next morning, I did a whole lot of thinking. I was thinking about what happened that night. I could have gotten stabbed or maybe even killed. I started saying to myself, "Damn, I was lucky this time." That was where I wanted to stop screwing around and start doing something with my life.

So what I did for the next couple of weeks is I went out and looked for a job. I filled out applications here and there. One day I heard about the California Conservation Corps. I really didn't know much about them at first. So one day I called information and asked them for the Central L.A. Center's address. They gave me the address, and the next morning, I went and asked some questions about the CCC. They told me a few things that the CCC does. I was pretty interested in what they do. So what I did was fill out an application.

I didn't get a phone call for a while. Finally, after two months went by, I received a call. It was the CCC. They asked me if I was still interested, and I said, "Hell if I ain't." This was some time in the middle of May. I went to the Center for an orientation. They talked to me about where they were going to send me for about twenty-one days. They were going to send me to the CCC Academy. They explained to me what I was going to be doing up there. What I was going to do up at the Academy was train for this job.

I picked up my ticket from them June 1, in the morning, and I left for the Academy that night. I arrived at the Academy the next morning. For the next twenty-one days up there, it was hell. But I made it. I also have to admit, I learned a whole lot up there. I learned things I never knew or did before in my life. I learned first aid, basic fire fighting, flood fighting, ect. I also learned how to respect people more than I did before. A lot of people didn't make it up there, but I did and I'm proud of it.

Now I'm working at the L.A. Urban Center for the California Conservation Corps. I feel that I owe the C's quite a bit for helping me stay off the streets and be someone. I can't say I changed 100 percent yet, because I still party here and there. But I'll try my best to get up there with the C's help. I thank the CCC for helping me change, and if I ever do lose this job, I still thank them for teaching me what I know.

Things I don't do any more since I've been in the C's: 1. Gang-bang 2. Steal. 3. Smoke kools. 4. I don't go out like I used to. 5. Fight for any reason. 6. Start cars on fire just for the hell of it. And so on. You name it. I did it. But now I dont. There are too many nicer things to do in this world.

P.S. Now I'm just an average guy.

Wednesday, November 9, 1983

Overall, today was a paradigm type day which means that everyone settled into something on his own except Michael who couldn't settle down and who ended up drawing Herb and finally Jose into a discussion about cars.

Tomorrow, I'm going to ask them to write a short statement of purpose for the hour. In it, they'll include the activity or activities they will do that will lead them one hour closer to attaining their goals in the program. Then near the end of the hour, I'll ask them to write about what they actually did. This may help them take more conscious responsibility for what they do in class.

It seems that Michael is always waiting for me to program him. His idea of the school situation is one in which he doesn't do anything until he is told. I'm still not going to play that game. Not yet anyway. One way or another, I'm going to set it up so Michael internalizes what's going on here and creates his own goals. Otherwise, he won't leave here with any different attitudes toward literacy or any motivation to take it any further on his own.

Charles read some selections in Modern American Prose.

Enrique read "How I Write My Books," an article in a Writer's Digest I brought.

Albert worked on several different pieces of writing, but so far, he hasn't asked me to read any of them.

Herb read one of the write ups from the Me Series, and then he read the sports page of the LA Times.

Jose read the sports page, then got into Michael's discussion about cars.

Thursday, November 10, 1983

I handed out Frank Gaik's autobiographical poem format and let them look at it. Then I asked them to write what they planned to do for the hour and told them I'd ask them to write a short report of what they accomplished at the end of the hour. I said they're free to change their minds during the hour. All they have to do is report the change in their final statements.

Michael typed Albert's Jonestown story for the paper but got frustrated with the typewriter and quit after about half an hour.

Enrique continued to read the Writer's Digest article. He didn't finish all the author's statements of how they write their books, so he took the magazine home.

Albert and Herb worked on the autobiographical poem. I showed them a brainstorming method to use to generate several ideas for each category before deciding which idea to use. They seemed to enjoy doing it.

Wednesday, November 16, 1983

Only Albert and Michael were here today. The rest were on spike, spraying the med fly.

I had typed the first page of Albert's article for the paper, so I gave it to Michael and Albert to read.

They both started off the hour with entries in their daily logs.

I dicussed with Michael the possibility of his becoming a reporter for the paper, expecially in the area of sports. He went down and talked to Judith Rodby about it. I think this is something he can get into. It would seem to fit his interest in sports and his inclination toward movement and interaction with other people.

Albert worked on revising the last page of his article.

Thursday, November 17, 1983

Charles read a Newsweek I had brought in, and then he wrote some.

Herb read the first page of Albert's Jonestown story and then wrote a piece about his girlfriend's pregnancy. I read it and was touched by his sensitivity, especially the sentence, "I was nervous and happy and I got up and walked around." He is starting to risk showing his feelings.

Enrique read a Newsweek. For next week he plans to organize a report he'd like to write for the paper.

Albert finished revising the last page of his article.

Michael didn't show.

I felt very good about the day. They all really got into what they were doing.

Tuesday, November 22, 1983

Charles read a Newsweek article about The Day After and started a discussion about who would make "such a thing. I mean, somebody made that bomb. Man, that just knocks me out. Somebody thought that up and now people make those things."

That was a fresh perspective. Why would someone invent and continue to develop such a horrible thing? I talked to them about the time it was developed, WW II, the fact that Hitler's scientists were working on one ("Why didn't they drop it on him?" Albert asked.) the war with the Japanese.

But of course Charles is right. How could anyone ever think something like that up, and how could people keep on making them? Insanity.

Michael read the sports page of the LA Times.

Albert and I talked about his starting another story. I don't want to see him and Jose get intimidated by the success they had with their first pieces. So Albert started on another story.

Wednesday, November 23, 1983

Everyone was gone today but Herb and Michael. Albert was here for a minute, and I gave him a copy of the second typed page of his article before he left.

Michael read the sports page of a USA Today, and Herb read the other sections. Herb also read a boxing article in Newsweek.

Tuesday, November 29, 1983

Today I talked to each one (except for Charles and Albert who weren't here) about doing an article for the final edition of the newspaper before the end of the semester.

Herb says he'll write about the very recent birth of his son.

Jose is going to write about an article on inner-city gangs that's running right now in the Herald.

Enrique plans to write about the panel discussion on TV that followed the screening of The Day After.

Michael is going to write a sports article on pro football teams. He'll go around and interview people about their favorite teams, who they think will win the Super Bowl, etc.

Jose had such success with the publication of his first article that now he's having trouble writing again. He's reading, but he doesn't want to start writing.

Michael seems to be withdrawing. He likes to read the sports page, but it seems that once I ask him to write a specific article, he digs in his heels, turned off by having an "assignment." That's possibly a good sign, a sign that his own choices of what he will write are starting to feel better than what the "teacher" assigns him.

Wednesday, November 30, 1983

Michael and Albert weren't here today.

Charles is back and still wants to try a play. He got started.

Herb is working on the childbirth story.

Jose read the newspapers I brought and talked about the article on the gangs, but he said he's not ready to start writing yet.

Enrique read a Newsweek article about The Day After and then worked on his article. I read what he wrote yesterday and responded to content about Kissinger.

Late Entry--End of the Fall Semester, 1983

For the rest of the semester, they all recorded a "radio play" over in the audio lab. They became enthusiastic, especially Michael, and ended up playing the cassette at the Christmas party in spite of its X-rated passages.

We also xeroxed off copies of the articles written by Herb, Albert, and Michael and handed them out at the Christmas party. Copies of them follow.

Childbirth

I'm going to share a little bit of my experience of being around my expecting lady. Not that any of you care, but I do. Starting at the first three months when she called me at home and told me she was going to have my child, boy, I was so proud.

I didn't think I would be having one so soon, but for the first six months everything was fine, except she started to gain weight. But that was OK. HA!! When she started going back and forth to the hospital, she kept thinking she might lose the baby. But she didn't.

Then came the seventh month. She would complain about the pains. But it still wasn't the right one's. I say I must have gone to the hospital about ten times. Still false labor. I was really tired. But I didn't let her know I was just waiting for the right time.

Then came November 16. The pains began to get closer, about forty-five minutes apart. She had pains off and on, all night long. She grabbed me at night and pulled me back and forth. So then on the seventeenth, she went to the hospital again. Still it wasn't the right time. She was sent home again. I thought, Man, when is it going to be the right time?

Then we went on. The night of November 23, all night she was crying and pulling me. She would get a pain, and she would breathe really hard. So the next morning she was having pains every fifteen minutes. Then I was really nervous. She woke up that morning, and she was still hurting. She would walk around trying not to show it, but I knew she was hurting.

So we had Thanksgiving dinner, and she took a shower, and then the pains got worse. She started to cry. Then she called me, and I started talking to her, reminding her what the doctor said. But the pains were right now, so I called the ambulance, and it came.

We got to the hospital, and the doctor checked her and said the pains weren't close enough. They were ten minutes apart and needed to be two to three minutes apart. She dilated up to four centimeters. So they told her to go home again, and she might come back before the night was over. So we came home.

The doctors told her to come back that next morning so they could do a test on her. So all night long, she grabbed and pulled me. It felt like my eyeballs were being shaken out of my head (HA). We went back to the hospital that morning, and it was 10:45 when we arrived there. So they checked her once again. Her water bag had broken. She had dialated up to six centimeters, and the pains were five minutes apart. So they tried the test on her for about thirty minutes.

Then her mother came and got me out of the father's waiting room and said it was time. I was so happy, scared and nervous, but I went into the delivery room. They put her on the table, and she began to push. She pushed two times, and she grabbed my hands really tight. And I pulled away because whe was hurting me.

Then the baby's head came out. I saw everything; then they said, "Push! Push!" So she pushed two times, and there came my son. Yea! Herbert Hoover Blood the Third! Yea! I was so proud and happy, and I almost wanted to cry. So I kissed Tracy, and she was jealous because she wanted a girl and I wanted a boy. And I laughed at her.

The baby was a fine boy, six pounds, fourteen ounces, twenty inches, and he looks just like me. I'm really glad to have shared my experiencing my lady having a baby and how good it feels to be there through the whole nine months.

Herb Blood

An Inside Story Involving the Jim Jones Killings in Jonestown in 1978

I want to share an inside story involving the Jonestown killings that happened a few years ago. There was a number of people who died in this "so-called" religious group's march to their promised land, and you may not have any ideas to get a better outlook on this incident. I've had an opportunity to meet and question a young lady who was not only involved deeply but who survived this act of violence.

There have been quite a few stories and pictures made, but no one really knows what really happened. The young lady named

Yolonda who told me this story was a member of this religious group for quite a few years, and after she reached 18 years of age, she was appointed to be a member of the church security team organized by Jim Jones himself. The security team duties were to protect and serve the people of the Church. The security team set out to the forest to train and practice different procedures to kill a human being.

Yolonda also had eight family members who were members of the Church and also died in the 1978 killings that took place in Jonestown. Yolonda admitted to having an affair with Jim's son during that time, and also he was a member of this security team.

I asked Yolanda how or what procedures did someone have to take to be a part of the security team. She replied, "you had to be one of the good folks and also be very cooperative." I asked what way did you have to be cooperative? She replied, "No matter what Jim wanted you to do, you had to do so or be forced by security, and your family didn't have a say so." Yolonda also believed she witnessed Jim having sex with a young girl about 17 years old, and also she believed Jim took drugs.

Yolonda said the places in Jonestown were as nasty as hell itself, and the people just didn't see the conditions and incidents that took place.

The day of the killing, the security team, along with Yolonda and Jim's son, were transferred to another town to complete their training course. Yolonda overheard a radio station speaking of a big kill in Jonestown, and she tried to call Jonestown, but she was unsuccessful in doing so.

At the time of hearing about the killings, she was over at some friends' house, and also they were members of the church. Yolonda's friend had two young daughters and a husband. That morning of the killing, Yolonda overheard the lady and her husband arguing. The man didn't want the lady to take his daughters back to Jonestown. The husband left for work, and the lady started pacing the floor acting strange.

Yolonda overheard the lady in the kitchen rummaging in drawers. Yolonda didn't pay attention, because she was brading one of the young girl's hair. The lady grabbed one of her daughters and pulled the screaming girl into a room and cut the girl to death with a long butcher knife. By then Yolonda knew something was wrong, so she ran out after noticing that the other young girl wouldn't come with her. The other young girl ran to the door where she heard screaming. Then the lady snatched the second daughter in and cut her to death.

Yolonda said after the poice arrived, she went back into the house and looked into the blood-covered room. The lady was still pushing and pulling the long butcher knife through her own neck until there was a snap and lady died.

Yolonda was called several times down to be questioned by the police and FBI about the incidents, and during one of the questionings, the police played a tape that was recorded during the time of the killings in Jonestown. She overheard a lot of shouting and screaming.

Now let's evaluate this more closely. Jim was known to have many look-alikes who could have passed for him to the naked eye. The Associated Press reported the autopsy report proved that the body found was Jim Jones' and not another person's. If Jim was considered to be a very clever guy, don't you think that he could have been prepared for this incident, or did Jim really die with this folks' assembly?

If Jim could brainwash over 2000 people, if he really did, I feel maybe he would have prepared a look-alike to fit his description. If my theory is true, Jim Jones is probably in an ensconced situation until the incident blows over.

But what do you really believe after evaluating the incident? Did the story Yolonda told sound truthful, or did you feel it sounded like she was trying to hide something? Do you think Yolonda was a part of this crime, or was she just lucky? Why didn't the FBI share the recording that was found with the public? Or was there a tape ever found?

Why was the security team sent away? Why did they practice in another town when the church was located in the forest anyway? Do you feel that Yolonda really told the truth about those two girls and their mother killing them?

What would you have done if you were engaged in a situation like this?

Tuesday, January 10, 1984

Back at it, and there are some surprises, the main one being the switch in class members. I lost Enrique and Michael in the reshuffling and gained two women, Lydia and Cynthia. I kept Charles and Berbert. Jose has quit the CCC to go work in San Francisco.

This changes my plan to have them work on the play, but so what. At first I felt resentment at the change, but now I look forward to it, expecially after talking to the new people and asking them to write something about their goals. Cynthia seemed reserved at first, but I was happy to see the quality of her writing. She's worried about her spelling, but I see no problems. Also, her interest in writing poems and stories gives me a boost. I showed her a workbook and told her she can do the work on spelling rules whenever she wants.

Lydia does have spelling problems, but they're not serious. Right now she's most interested in working on a resume since she only has three months left in the CCC.

Charles may only be here on Tuesdays, and he says he wants to work on the play. He took the tape home today to play it for his wife.

Herb said his girlfriend xeroxed his story about the birth of their child and gave copies to his mother and grandmother who liked it. He was obviously proud to tell me about this.

I encouraged them all to continue writing articles for the paper.

It was a good start.

Wednesday, January 11, 1984

Michael came today and was predictably freaked out at being switched to another group. He sat at his new group's table, quiet and sulking. Olga could see him, and after a while, she called me out into the hall. She said Michael was completely blocked up and now "on emotional strike," and she'd like to switch him back to my group.

That was OK with me, since I hadn't been in favor of the changes in the first place. Still, when he came back, it was the same old story. He started joking with Herb who was brainstorming some ideas for writing. I felt that sinking feelling in my stomach, and after I started Lydia and Cynthia to work, I asked Michael and Herb to come to the lab for a talk.

I had planned to talk to Michael about the way I was feeling due to his return, but before I had a chance to, he came up with a suggestion that we start our own group newspaper. He was enthusiastic, and his enthusiasm generated some energy among the three of us. So I decided to go along and see how Michael performs.

Michael and Herb went and presented the idea to Lydia and Cynthia, and they said they liked it. After class, I told Michael that I thought the paper idea was a good one. He said something about how we had started other projects and let them drop, but this is one we could keep going, that it would always be something new.

This is an interesting new turn of events for Michael. I wonder what is motivating him? Maybe being switched to another group shook him up. Maybe the Christmas break gave him time to think this over and value the time he spends here.

Then, later today, I was reading Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, and I saw this: "Even though you try to put people under some control, it is impossible. You cannot do it. The best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in its wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious pasture is the way to control him. So it is with people. First let them do what they want and watch them. This is the best policy. To ignore them is not good; that is the worst policy. The second worst is trying to control them. The best one is to watch them, just to watch them, without trying to control them." (p. 32)

Maybe this is happening with Michael.

Thursday, January 12, 1984

I started off asking them what they wanted to do about their newspaper. Michael wanted to get a start but "next week." I suggested we at least create some categories for weekly columns and gave each one a copy of Newsweek so they could look at the categories in the table of contents. Then we came up with the following list: sports, movies, reading (reviews of their reading), general news, neighborhood corner, CCC, editorial, cartoons, and poetry.

I suggested they now brainstorm for ideas under any category that interested them in order to come up with something to write about. Here's what happened.

Herb read for a minute in his Newsweek and then started writing. It was the start of a piece for the neighborhood corner. He said he didn't like what he had written but showed it to me anyway. It was about fifteen girls on his block. I said that sounded interesting to me, but he said he still wants to write about something else. I was glad to see him just start right in. He is certainly less blocked than he was last semester.

Lydia and I talked about problems with the CCC's that she wants to write about. She couldn't start writing, so I asked her questions as a form of oral prewriting. Still, even after talking quite articulately and with feeling about the problems, she still had a problem making the transition to writing.

Cunthia read in the short story anthology I gave her. At the end of the period, she told me she wasn't writing because she would rather write at home.

Michael read the sports section and then started working on his Super Bowl predictions.

Tuesday, January 17, 1984

Charles and Michael had a hard time getting down to work today and subsequently drew Herb off too.

Cynthia wert to another desk and wrote a movie review of *Terms of Endearment.* I read it and commented on it. The writing was quite good. The only change I suggested was that she add some specific scene descriptions to explain what she meant by her statement, "family relations and strains," but she immediately came out with objections to changing anything, so I backed off.

I tried "watching" Michael, Charles, and Herb shooting the bull, even though I felt nervous about the noise they were making. Finally though, I had to give in and ask Michael to tell Charles what they had decided to do as a group project this semester (the newspaper). Then, through that and bringing them back to what each planned to write, I got them to start writing. Too bad they didn't take the initiative themselves.

Charles started working on a cartoon.

Michael interviewed us on our Super Bowl predictions and then went to interview other members at other tables. He also said he's going to work on a neighborhood corner story. He took his folder with him so he can work at home.

Herb and I talked about the story he's working on, and he wrote more on it.

Cynthia took her piece home too in order to look up some spellings.

Tuesday, January 31, 1984

The first issue of our paper, *The New Kid in Town,* came out this past Thursday, January 26. It had something in it under every category we listed except reading reviews.

I've been pleasantly surprised by everyone's contribution.

Cynthia has been writing the most. For the first issue, she wrote an editorial, a poem, a piece of CCC news, and a movie review. She's a very fluent, unblocked writer, even though she revises as she goes along. She's not at all willing to revise in response to my comments, so I'm leaving that be. All she wants to do is look up words that I've underlined for misspelling. When I have suggested that she add some specific examples of what she is writing about, she says that would just be repeating herself.

Even though that reaction is frustrating to me, I'd rather feel that way than see her turned off because I'm tampering with her writing.

Herb, in his own way, is a success story. He wrote a farewell to the CCC and a neighborhood corner article for the paper. He started the corner story a couple of weeks ago and let it ride for a few days. Then when the deadline came on Wednesday, he did a cartoon with Michael ("Stickman the Playboy"), finished up the corner story, and wrote his farewell.

When he first came, he would write very seldom and that slowly and with many pauses and corrections. Now he has switched his attention from the "code" to the message, and he gets his ideas down with much less pain and trouble.

When Michael had the idea for the paper, I was pleasantly surprised but sceptical. But he has come across so far. He still dashes off his work and doesn't want to go back over it to check for mistakes, and he makes quite a few careless ones in his first drafts. But he produced a three-part sports section and worked with Herb on "Stickman the Playboy."

Lydia has decided not to work on the paper because of interpersonal problems with Michael. They work on the same crew and don't get along with each other. She also claims that Michael blew her chances to get transferred to the weatherization crew by badmouthing her to the supervisor who makes the final decision on transfers. If she had made weatherization, she would have been able to stay on with the C's another six months, so she's very bitter about this. Instead of working on the paper, she reads and from time to time, does exercises in a workbook.

Charles did get into weatherization, so he can only come once a week. When he's here, it creates a day of excitement for Herb and Michael, and they talk and laugh for as long as I let them.

Wednesday, February 1, 1984

I'm interested now in their reactions after the publication of the first issue of The New Kid in Town. I expected a letdown, and yersterday didn't thwart my expectation. Michael expecially is a deadline meeter, so today I set the deadline up to see what will happen. That may have been a mistake since it took the decision out of their hands, but this will give them some experience with finishing their rough drafts with enough time at least to look up misspelled words.

Today I simply watched them to see what they would do without any direct coaching from me. They knew what needed to be done, another issue of the paper. Michael read the Times quietly and then slept for the last ten minutes.

Cynthia free wrote for the first time.

Lydia read a book from the hook-on books box and then read a magazine.

The question continues to come up in my mind, "Aren't you failing Michael by letting him screw off?" The answer is "Yes." Even though I'm trying to put him in the position of taking responsibility for what he does or doesn't do, I still have a responsibility to inspire him to do that.

That's my goal now, to make him more conscious of his choice in this and to offer him a wide variety of alternatives to choose from.

Thursday, February 2, 1984 (Happy birthday, James Joyce)

Today only Cynthia and Michael were here. Lydia was docked for the day and didn't come. I don't know where Herb was.

I asked Michael to free write as a way of waking up and warming up for writing. He did for a while but couldn't shake the fatigue. Cynthia was tired too, so I suggested that they go around to the other groups and solicit articles for the newspaper. They did, and both received positive responses. Emily's group made commitments for cartoons and a group article.

Tuesday, February 7, 1984

Charles and Herb weren't here.

Cynthia worked on an article and then went to talk to Jayasri's group about the article they're planning for the paper.

Lydia brought in a newspaper article about a case of child molesting by a male pre-school teacher and read that. She discussed with me the problems she's having with her back, and as a result, with the C's for having missed work to see a doctor. Then she began reading Richard Bach's Illusions. I brought it in either to read to them or have them read it.

Michael read the sports pages from USA Today and The LA Times. Then he took a break and talked to a member of another group.

When he and Cynthia got back, I talked to them about the paper, retracting my deadline. Instead of a deadline, I suggested they try to work on it every day and publish when we had enough articles. This way we could see if we could avoid the typical deadline behavior of laying off for a week and then writing frantically to beat the deadline.

They agreed to try. We may just find out that the deadline works best. It will be interesting to see.

Wednesday, February 8, 1984

Cynthia wrote another article today and got two articles from Emily's group.

Michael read sports articles and started an article based on what he read.

Lydia read the copy of the back exercises I brought her. Then she read on in Illusions.

Actually, I was wrong about what Michael wrote. He wrote an editorial about the changes in the C's. Cynthia also wrote one about the same thing. Many of the kids are upset about some of the new changes: having to shine their boots, change their shoulder patches, do PE in "hookline" (on line instead of standing in random places), and Michael and Cynthia are voicing these concerns in our paper.

Thursday, February 9, 1984

Michael worked today on revising his editorial. He read it aloud to me and caught most of his first draft problems himself. Then he wrote a sports article based on reading the two sports sections, and he started on a cartoon for the paper, another "Stickman the Playboy."

Cynthia talked to another instructor, DeDe Gallow, for much of the period. Then she went to ask for articles from the other groups. She seems to be forming an attachment for DeDe, finding in her what seems to be a role model for her own life.

DeDe tells these kids about her own background, one that's similar to theirs, as a way of convincing them that they can do the same thing she has. I think the relationship for Cynthia is a valuable one. It will help convince her that she can become a member of the club of literate people.

Lydia wanted to take Illusions to the library to read. She likes the library environment, and that's a good inclination for me to encourage, so I let her go.

I enjoyed the day today. I hope Michael will keep up his interest and work on the paper.

Tuesday, February 21, 1984

I'm without students today. They're all away at Huntington Park, planting trees.

This past Thursday, they put out the second issue of the paper. Charles contributed some nice art work to this one, doing stylized Afro-American figures for the "All About Dreadlocks" articles from Emily's group.

The new non-deadline system has worked, giving them something to do every day instead of establishing the rhythm of work and slack off.

Something I have to stay conscious of in the paper production is to let them do it. For the first issue, I did the layout and paste up myself, but this last time, I brought scissors and tape to class and let them do the layout. My own perfectionist tencency inclines me to do it all myself, but this issue turned out just fine, and now they know they can do it all themselves without any problems.

Wednesday, February 29, 1984

Cynthia has missed ever since last Thursday, and I found out today that she has gotten a better job. That's what Lydia told me, anyway. Michael said he thought Cynthia was on jury duty.

Last week, Cynthia was the only one here, since the others were on spike at Huntington park. I was interested to see her reaction to _Illusions._ She read the first part and said she liked it, but she put it down. I gave her _The Psychology of Consciousness_ to try, and she went to sleep reading it. She had told me once that reading puts her to sleep and that she doesn't like to read. That's surprising considering the fact that she is such a competent writer.

Lydia is back today for the first time since week before last. She has been taking her remaining vacation days to go job hunting. Yesterday she went to the Courthouse for an interview for a job with the city as a gardner. She also applied for a job at the AAA.

I gave her a copy of Writing, the collection of how-to's and sample papers that I wrote for my regular students. She read around in it, showing interest in the sample student papers. When I talked to her about them, I found out that she had taken the satirical papers seriously.

I'm happy with the way Michael's been working and acting for the past few weeks. He has retained his interest and enthusiasm for the newspaper, and he is much more even in his relationships with others. He seems somehow more self-possessed and tolerant of others. I hope he keeps it up.

Thursday, March 8, 1984

Lydia had a hard time getting down to work, and when she did, her heart wasn't in it. When I talked to her about it, the problem turned out to be that she is leaving the C's next month and can't think of anything but her job search. As she told me this, tears welled up in her eyes, and from what she said, I could tell she thought I wanted to make her do "work" in here.

I suggested she use this hour in her job search, looking up jobs in the classifieds and calling for interview appointments on the phone here. After all, that will involve her in "hands-on" application of literacy skills.

I also asked Olga over to talk to us about helping Lydia. The change in Lydia was immediate. The release from the constraints she had imagined she was under in here also released a lot of energy.

This is another instance during which I have experienced the importance of finding out "where they are at" instead of just trying to teach them something. More and more, I can see how the latter depends on the former.

Michael is now working with the newly-constituted CCC newspaper as sports editor and is keeping up his writing. I sat in on their meeting yesterday and was impressed with the way he handled himself.

Cynthia is back today. She was on jury duty but has been released. I gave her a copy of _Writing_ and talked to her about the new organization of the newspaper.

She didn't say what she wants to do for it.

Thursday March 15, 1984

I've been having a hard time motivating Cynthia lately. Whenever I suggest some projects she could start, she does a kind of verbal judo in order not to commit herself to anything. For instance, when I asked her how she would like to use the remaining six weeks, she said she's a person who doesn't plan for the future. She only lives one day at a time.

She did show some interest in going to the library. She said she has a city library card but hasn't ever checked out a book because she's intimidated by all the numbers on the cards. Also, she's not interested in books. She's more interested in old movies and art.

I said we could watch movies in the special collections room, and maybe the LA Library has a similar service. Also, any library has oversized art books with large color reproductions. She wants to learn how to gain access to that, so I'll take them over to our library and walk them through.

As we worked today, Michael on an article, Lydia on her income tax, Cynthia on a poem and article, I was conscious of how we were acting independently of the school model. They had all picked their own projects and worked on them without any coaxing from me.

The physical setting helps with each one working where he or she is comfortable. I also like having other groups working in here. It adds to the feeling of action and things getting done.

Thursday, March 22, 1984

I'm still having problems with Cynthia about what she's going to do until the end of the year. It's like she's a child in a restaurant, and her parents are trying too hard to please her. It becomes a point of pride for the child to turn down every offer the parents make. I don't know what's going on.

Lydia is doing her job search with the classifieds. Her attitude and motivation have changed significantly now that she's doing this.

Michael is still doing fine with his writing for the paper.

Tuesday, April 17, 1984

In the last couple of weeks, there's been a change with Cynthia. I talked to her about the difficulty I was having figuring out what she wanted from me, and since then, she's been coming up with things to do on her own.

Last week she brought a stack of her poems for me to read. She had about thirty of them, written over her years in high school. I read them and talked to her about what I liked: her ability to handle profound subjects such as love, death, fear, suicide, and her technical talent with metaphor and imagery.

From the whole experience, I got the feeling she wanted to show her trust in me by letting me read such personal poems. At any rate, whatever is happening feels all right.

The new member of my group, Damon, is going through the usual period of adjustment with me. I can see from some of his interactions with the others that he has a quick mind and good sense of humor, but with me, he plays it pretty straight. He says he wants to become a pro basketball player.

Tuesday, April 17, 1984

I took Cynthia, Michael, and Damon to the library last Tuesday and showed them how to locate a book in the card catalogue, go up in the stacks and find it, and then take it down and check it out.

On the way back from the library, Damon asked me about using the gym, so on Wednesday I took him over and showed him.

Michael is a different person this semester. He has kept his enthusiasm for The New Kid in Town, and has continued to write for the program newspaper now that it has been consolidated. The one day he was suspended from work at the CCC, he came here anyway and wrote.

Today, Cynthia read Tracy and Hepburn, Michael wrote a sports article, and Damon worked on a poem about basketball, "APD," A Player's Dream. Then he did some free writing after reading the section on free writing in Writing.

I had some misgivings about Damon after he wrote the very first day about his unhappiness with the CCC. But he has done fine, self-motivated in his work and receptive to my suggestion that he try the operations in Writing.

In general, the dynamic of letting them take their own time with what they do has paid off in terms of their becoming self starting with reading and writing projects.

Wednesday, April 25, 1984

Cynthia left yesterday for crew leader school. It came out of the blue, as have most of their departures. She had told me when she was picked for the training, but it wasn't supposed to start until next month. Then they told her Monday that she would be going on the bus Tuesday night at 11:30.

At least she got a chance to come one last time. I wonder how the others feel when they just leave without coming back for any final goodbyes.

Kitchen Patrol: Removing a Barrier to Literacy Acquisition

Most of the instructor-researchers involved with the Model Literacy Project are specialists in rhetoric and composition or education. Sid Sondergard is a scholar of Renaissance drama. His "Kitchen Patrol" journal portrays the effect of folding such a person into the environment of a kitchen at a remote CCC base camp. The parallels and contrasts with Doug Cazort's journal are interesting. Doug was on familiar ground, in the University. Sid has traveled a thousand miles to a place that was unfamiliar and had taken up a way of life that was "natural" to the corpsmembers, but quite alien to him.

"Kitchen Patrol: Removing a Barrier to Literacy Acquisition"

Sid Sondergard

"Kitchen Patrol: Removing a Barrier to Literacy Acquisition"

My decision was certainly not without its literary precedents and parallels. Tirant lo Blanc often acted as steward to his soldiers, with authors Martorell and de Galba emphasizing that he reversed situations to demonstrate, by serving food and wine to the men, that he valued their contributions in battle as equal to his own. Spenser allows Artegall to humbly demonstrate the sincerity of his chivalry by choosing to serve the amazon Radigund--even though forced to perform mundane tasks like cooking and washing--rather than simply to defeat her in a contest of strength, a contest she had no hope of winning. With similar design and brave abandon, I, too, entered the ranks of culinary labor in order to earn the respect of the people I wished to assist in my role as a teacher.

I was one of the instructors from the University of Southern California's Model Literacy Project who spent June, 1984, as curriculum advisors for the Del Norte Center of the California Conservation Corps. Early communications between Los Angeles and Del Norte had indicated that our function would be similar to what it had been during the previous year's interaction with the C.C.C.: we would be injecting life into the Corps' educational program, employing nontraditional teaching methods to build confidence and enthusiasm among the corpsmembers in their ability to communicate both verbally and nonverbally. Naturally, since corpsmembers do spend the day *working*, we instructors discussed our individual intentions of experiencing a day or two from their point of view, expending the energy required to put in several hours of manual labor before expending the additional energy required to concentrate on learning (or teaching) in evening classes. We knew, of course, that the time for this would come after we had met with our students for a week or two, and had established a comfortable routine. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

All corpsmembers at Del Norte eat at a central mess hall, so with the prospect of having my breakfast cooked and served by someone else, I gladly faced the quarter-mile climb from our dormitory to the hall on the morning after our arrival. I didn't know that I would be the first member of the USC group to go through the breakfast line, but then I had no idea that the master of the kitchen, "Hoss" Mauldin, would be actively supervising the breakfast line, no idea that somehow he had not been informed that a crew of "guests" would be joining the normal ranks of the hungry, no idea that he would consider such information an exasperating imposition, and such guests as interlopers.

In ignorance, I picked up my tray and stood beaming at this man with the gray mustache who was orchestrating the breakfast service, thinking to myself all the while of the good faith I was exhibiting by showing up bright and early at 6:30 A.M. After looking me over as though I had arrived from Mars rather than Los Angeles, he turned to one of the corpsmembers distributing food and demanded, "Who _is_ this guy?" I immediately, cheerfully, spoke up--but my disarming witticisms fell on Hoss' decidedly deaf ears. Taking my tray full of steaming hot victuals, I sat down, miserable, feeling that I had somehow just stolen my breakfast.

Lunch became a slightly more verbal version of the breakfast intrigue, with Hoss obviously waiting for me at the end of the serving line. "Where're you from, originally?" he demanded. With naive midwestern pride, I declared I was from Kansas. "Flattest damn place on earth," replied Master Geographer Mauldin. As I slunk off to a table, I continued to hear thematic variations on this topic (Kansas as Wasteland; Kansas as Boredom Incarnate) judiciously calculated to reach my ears. I was beginning to feel more like a felon than a teacher, with Hoss as the cruel warden relishing my suffering.

Supper promised (in, unfortunately, the pejorative sense) to begin on a similar note. When I arrived at the head of the serving line, Hoss stared at me and demanded, "Are you one of those *vegetarians*?" The word was out that there would be members of our group who did not eat meat; obviously this was interpreted by Hoss as a form of elitism: simple intellectual snobbery. Flashing my biggest grin, I heartily replied, "No sir, I eat *everything*." This seemed to give him pause; he quietly nodded to the corpsmembers serving in line and passed my plate down. This seemed to me a significant victory, and I was determined to follow it with more decisive action: I needed to convince Hoss, and the corpsmembers, that being a teacher did not exclude me from being--and did not glorify me as something more than--a person in many ways like themselves. So I reasoned that if I would demonstrate my willingness to perform manual labor or whatever work the corpsmembers despised, perhaps they would be more willing to accept as sincere my chosen role, as a teacher. In his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, T.E. Lawrence explains that his men taught him "that no man could be their leader except he ate the ranks' food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself." Before I could perform as a teacher concerned with literacy acquisition, I had to be able to communicate with the corpsmembers and with the men and women who directed them daily on their own terms. To achieve this, I would try to "live level" with them.

When I finished eating supper, I brought my dishes up to the window where they were received by the corpsmembers who were in charge of washing them, and asked Hoss if I could help out in the kitchen the next day. Guardedly (i.e., with skeptical disbelief in his eyes) he said "Sure, we can always use help--doing dishes." The tone of the latter words was obviously meant to strike fear into my heart. After pondering whether he actually believed something to the effect that graduate students have no conception of what it means to work for a living, I replied that I'd start work after breakfast the next day.

Hoss was working in his office instead of supervising the breakfast line as I passed through on the morning following our "contract." After eating, I proceeded to step into the kitchen behind the trays of hot water where dirty dishes were soaking, and began washing off food before loading them into a large, sterilizing dishwasher. Twice I noticed Hoss' head poking around the corner, to watch me for an instant before disappearing. It took 30-40 minutes to finish sending the dishes, utensils and cooking apparatus through the machine, and then to stack them in their appropriate places. When I had finished rinsing and squeegeeing the wash counter, Hoss approached me and asked if I had to leave right away. Since I didn't, he invited me into his office to chat. In a now completely friendly, cordial tone, Hoss asked me what I was studying; in the course of an hour-long chat, we learned:

*I study literature, and Hoss' favorite short story is O. Henry's "The Ransom of Red Chief." He contritely declared, "I used to read much more than I do now."

*His son, of whom he is transparently proud, is currently (under the auspices of the Air Force) working on an M.S. in Physics, specializing in laser technology; his current pet project involves focusing a beam aimed at the moon, so the beam will not spread--even the tiniest fraction--any larger than the original beam's signal. Hoss takes pride in his contribution to this course of study, a "fancy" calculator that "had to be ordered directly from the factory." He considers his lack of understanding about the calculator to be a testament to the degree of his son's education.

*Hoss owns a farmhouse with approximately 40 acres of land; his daughter and son-in-law are arranging to purchase a farmhouse on 80 acres of nearby land. They may be able, cooperatively, to make a success of sharecropping and shared livestock breeding.

I was immensely relieved to be dealing with Hoss on a relaxed, communicative level. Bidding him a hearty farewell, I promised to be back to help at lunch.

My presence in the kitchen continued to generate more and more interest from Hoss after each succeeding meal. At supper of my first day of "work," he again asked, with genuine curiosity this time, where exactly I was from. When I again dutifully replied Kansas, his response was a smile and a nod: "I hear that's a nice place to raise a family." Within another two days, Hoss was asking me about my "favorite dinner," so he could plan it into the month's meal rotation. Hoss made a point of mentioning that he was aware of my presence each time I came back after a meal to help out, though he continued to show his surprise each time that I was actually there. Significantly, I had gained his respect and had opened channels for communication--Hoss began treating the fact that I was a teacher as an asset rather than a liability, and indeed the corpsmembers in the kitchen and outside began to reflect this change, asking my opinions on various topics, inquiring about me as an individual, etc.

My volunteer duty gave me the opportunity to witness another facet of the kitchen environment, the attitudes of corpsmembers assigned K.P. duty for a month. The timing of this could not have been better, for my last day at Del Norte coincided with some of the corpsmembers' last day in the kitchen. As a member of the cleanup crew, I had contact with them after every meal--under close, and often trying, circumstances.

My guess had been that the K.P. crew was held in general disesteem because it seemed an easy escape from the "real" work done outside "on the grade." The general joviality of two of the corpsmembers who acted as junior supervisors, Sandy "Cowboy" Perry and Tony Jackson, seemed to reinforce this suspicion. However, I quickly came to realize that K.P. duty is the most despised of all corpsmember jobs. There is a universal distaste for the combination of unglamorous work (serving food to the other corpsmembers, washing dishes, scrubbing floors, vacuuming the mess area) and long hours (the average K.P. workday begins around 5:00 A.M. and is finished by 7:00 P.M., with little time for relaxation or leisure activities in between).

Almost inevitably, there is a nearly universal lack of respect for K.P. work--corpsmembers coming home from the grade at the end of the day expect only one thing from the kitchen staff: that supper is on time. Not that it is delicious, nutritious, or attractively prepared: only that it is on time. When it isn't on time, ugly dissension follows. On one such occasion during our third week at Del Norte, I saw Cowboy (in an effort to hurry everything along himself) receive a nasty second-degree burn on the inside of his left thumb (though he simply taped it up the next day) and heard everyone in the corps hierarchy from C-1's (adult supervisors) to "newbies" (new corpsmembers) complaining about the kitchen staff's incompetence because supper was three minutes late. My own response was to assist the setting-up of the food line, then to dive anonymously into a pile of dirty dishes until the storm passed.

During my first week in the kitchen, I noticed that morale there seemed to be reasonably high; since the corpsmembers are not in competition, they work supportively. Everyone seemed to welcome my presence, and I tried to contribute to whatever good will already existed there. Since I had taken upon myself the job of Primary Dishwasher, I worked most closely with the lowliest members of the crew, Denise Church, Roland Pundt, and Frank Freeman. My first impressions were that Denise seemed very quiet but satisfied with working in the kitchen; Roland immediately made friends with me, and our joking seemed to make his day go a little faster; Frank seemed very kind and accomodating, well-adjusted in his role on the K.P. crew.

Within a week, I was ready to revise my initial impressions, feeling I had a much clearer insight into all three. Denise is simply shy, and a little reluctant to form friendships due to some unpleasant experiences in her past--but once she does accept someone as a friend, she is very warm, loves to joke, and is not reluctant to express her candid views on various subjects. Denise had begun, near the end of my second week in the kitchen, to make no attempt whatsoever to disguise the fact that she was anxiously anticipating her liberation from the mess hall on the 30th of the month. Time after time she sighed that all she wanted was "to be outdoors" doing "some real work."

Roland is very sharp--witty, inquisitive. A native of Hemmett, California, he talks fondly of the beauty of the desert (despite its desolation and arid climate). With little provocation, he will speak (and, with encouragement, write) about his ideal role model, an uncle who died within the last few years, a man who achieved three separate, climactic successes in his lifetime (one in wartime, one in private industry and one in land development). He has considered going into restaurant work when he finishes his term with the Conservation Corps, though he still had several months left when our time at Del Norte was finished. I watched Roland become a desperate man during our month's stay--he wanted out of the kitchen and its "never-ending" workday so badly that he contemplated quitting more than once when the end of his month duty seemed infinitely far away. He was still kidding around with me in the kitchen, but he was genuinely fatigued with the dawn-to-dusk work routine.

Frank Freeman is the kind of worker any employer would want--eager, friendly, sincere. According to Frank, this personality is attributable to his acceptance of the Christian religion. Prior to his conversion, he explained, he was "a tough guy" (he is very proud of his physique, and worked very hard in the weight-training class supervised by Donna Wagner, another USC instructor) who quarrelled frequently and indulged in drugs. Now he is slowly reading through the *Good News for Modern Man* colloquial translation of the New Testament, and has a very positive outlook on life. Frank was not going to be getting out of the kitchen at the end of the month, but this didn't seem to bother him.

In the introduction to his treatise *In Russian and French Prisons*, Peter Kropotkin comments on well-meaning, energetic, though short-lived attempts at social reform, that "It is good enough if, after all the noise, things have not gone from bad to worse." Like the other USC instructors, I was acutely aware that one month gave us very little time to effect changes of a permanent sort in the corpsmembers' attitudes towards literacy acquisition; furthermore, we did not wish to appear as a medicine show of jolly do-gooders who would move on at month's end having done little but amuse (or bedevil) the locals. I perceived Hoss Mauldin's initial reaction to me as an indication of a potential barrier to my effectiveness as an instructor coming from an environment foreign to him and to the corpsmembers--I was concerned that this attitude of resentment or distrust toward an "outsider" might severely limit me as a teacher, so I decided to enter their environment via the kitchen.

I offer this as only one solution to the immediate problem I encountered. In this instance, it was successful in three ways: it immediately improved rapport with Hoss; it allowed me access to several corpsmembers in situations I would not have otherwise observed, giving me a greater appreciation for the work they perform; and perhaps most importantly, it was reflected in the increased enthusiasm and interest exhibited by the corpsmembers I tutored each evening: I was more respected in my professional capacity as teacher because I had demonstrated that literacy is not anathema to the kind of labor to which they were accustomed. As they walked into my reading and writing sessions, they would tease me about my dishpan hands--but they would listen when I spoke.

Allentown II

DeDe Gallow's "Allentown II" is interesting as putting the researcher into the picture. Of course most of us suspect that the choice of research topics is not always objective, or carerist, but rarely do we find a researcher as willing as DeDe Gallow to show us the very human motivations that bring a researcher to particular studies.

ALLENTOWN II

DeDe Gallow

ALLENTOWN II

We're living here in Allentown
And they're closing all the factories down
All the promises our teachers gave
If we worked hard, if we behaved
So the graduations hang on the wall
But they never really helped us at all
No they never taught us what was real
Iron and coal, chromium steel
And we're waiting here in Allentown...

Billy Joel

In the summer of 1983, when Michael asked for volunteers to work with inner-city youth in a model literacy program, all I could think of was Billy Joel's "Allentown." It reminded me a great deal of where I'd grown up. That place was in my thoughts a great deal the weekend before the project was to begin. While the other volunteers may have been hunting around for lessons or wondering whether the students would be hostile or eager, I was thinking about my Allentown and wondering why I'd ever volunteered to be part of this program.

My Allentown was in my thoughts after years of trying to forget it by getting as far away from it as possible. Distance had nothing to do with it, not in miles, anyway. Distance in attitude, aspirations, language, and education was what I'd wanted and thought I'd gotten. But it didn't seem that way in the summer of 1983.

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In all fairness to the real Allentown, Pennsylvania, my hometown did not suffer the same economic deprivation, but it was definitely a working class community. At the time I was growing up there, it was reported to have one of the highest crime rates in the nation. I remember many nights sweating under the covers as strangers stopped under my bedroom windows or as police lights shone in.

The main strip was sooty and lined with bars which seemed to be open all day, telephone booths filled with broken wine bottles and urine soaked newspapers, carnicerias, and take-out places. The new junior high in town was away from the strip, but around the corner from the drug trafficing center. Walking to school was a nerve-wracking routine of crossing from one side of the street to the other and back to aviod open doorways or maurauding packs of dogs. Once in school it wasn't uncommon to be cornered in dark hallways if you were known as a "brain" or to have your books tossed into the girls' room toilet. My high school, though also once known for its violence, was relatively calm when I attended. There were gangs, uninterested students, but also groups of highly motivated college-bound seniors. Pretty ordinary high school stuff.

I guess the real essence of Allentown was at home. Home was a lot of places while I was in school. It was the duplex my sisters, mother and I shared when I was seven right after my father died; the dark and bedbug infested flophouse room by the riverbed my mother and I shared alone; or any one of the various foster homes in between. There was little warmth in any of these places and certainly no books, except the ones I brought in.

I remember the day I got hooked on books. My older sister sat me down and plunked a copy of Little Women in my lap. "Daddy gave me this," she said, "Daddy loved to read." That was all I needed. Holding a book he might have held, turning pages he might have touched was almost as good as having him there. Books became my protector and sustenance, my escape from Allentown.

A few years later I happened upon an open notebook in the middle of the livingroom floor. My older sister had been lying on her stomach, feverishly writing in it. With all the passion of a violinist, she'd been hurriedly scrawling back and forth, back and forth. At some point the writing had freed her and only then did she get up and leave. I couldn't help but look. "Mum's been gone three days this time," the first line read. "What are we supposed to eat--ice cube sandwiches??!!!" I laughed out loud. Ice cube sandwiches had become a joke among us children as, over the years, our mother started disappearing and our financial situation got worse and worse. I read on. "Mum's drunk all the time. I hate it when she's drunk." In all the years since my father's death, since our mother's alcoholism had escalated, this was the first time the reality had ever been put into words. The conspiracy of silence we all shared was broken. We'd always known it, never spoken it, but somehow the writing had set it free. My sister was having conversations with herself, but they were physical because of the pen, the paper, and the rapid scribbling. I started writing, too, but for myself only, just as my sister had been doing.

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When you're thirteen and you spend your time reading and writing in a community where most people don't, it's hard. I never saw my mother or foster parents read or write. Perhaps that's why they objected so much to me reading and writing. I was told to stop and to go outside and play, to be "normal." I couldn't understand why -- when most adults I knew would die for their children to read -- I was being made to stop. In one foster home I had to hide my journal from a foster mother who made weekly raids on my dresser drawers and closets. I also hid it from my foster sisters who glowered at me suspiciously whenever I wrote in it and teased me about the big words I used. They said boys wouldn't like me because I was too smart.

I didn't care. Despite the ostracism I knew reading and writing would get me out of Allentown, to a place where people talked about ideas, read good books, saw plays and enjoyed art, a place where an idea of a good time wasn't getting loaded. I believed with all my heart that if I wanted to get there, college could take me. When I turned sixteen and struck out on my own, scholarship in hand, I swore I'd never go back to that gray and little place.

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In the summer of 1983, when I contemplated figuritively going back to Allentown by being involved with the CCC, it was with bitterness. I had just completed a Masters degree, had a wonderful reputation as a teacher, and could not get a job. That wasn't unusual. Many college graduates were in the same boat. What curdled my soul, however, was that everywhere I applied, I was told I was overqualified. That was the ultimate betrayal. How could I preach literacy, knowing that for the few from Allentowns all over who wanted to learn, education is almost a god? It represents a golden key. All I thought it had done for me was to separate me from people because it made me different and it made me overqualified.

Had I gone to school solely to get a job? I had to admit, no, but I was living in a real world. That, coupled with the perpetual fear of economic insecurity that comes from growing up in an alcoholic household and being shunted from foster home to foster home, surely made job security one of my goals. If I was going to help CCC members, how could I tell them that learning to fill out a job application or writing a resume isn't enough and that anything more is almost too much? Any more and they wouldn't fit in anywhere. They'd be different from their friends and family and they'd probably always carry around just enough of the insecurity of coming from Allentown to keep them from feeling at home elsewhere. Being Black, Hispanic, Oriental or just plain White female was going to make it all the harder.

Why, then, had I said yes? I knew I'd better know before the first day of class. What I came up with was this: to be able to read and like reading brought beauty and excitememt to a painful and lonely youth and young adulthood. When I could not escape the beatings, the drunkenness and the filth, there were always books from the local library or a kind and caring teacher. To be able to write and to like writing meant to be able to shriek out my rage without getting smacked across the face for it, to wax poetic to an audience of one, or simply to chronicle the day's events, to leave a record that I had been here and I had survived.

Ultimately, it was a message worth repeating.

Literacy Spikes

The second phase of the Model Literacy Project research with members of the California Conservation Corps involved bringing CCC crews from a number of centers to the USC campus for three weeks, during which they spent the mornings and early afternoon working to prepare the campus for the Olympics and in the late afternoon and evening participated in literacy activities. This was the proto-type for making similar university - CCC exchanges an integral part of corpsmember experience, state-wide. Corpsmembers, in effect, pay for their literacy instruction by their work with the university buildings and grounds crews, just as if they were recepients of work-study grants.

The third phase of the research project was to send a group of researchers to the remote Del Norte California Conservation Corps Center at the mouth of the Klammath River on the Oregon border. The MLP group became part of the Center's CCC staff, supplementing the regular educational program while observing corpsmember attitudes towards and uses of literacy, *in situ.*

Elspeth Stuckey was research coordinator for the Klammath project. Her reports to the CCC on these two projects follow.

The U.S.C. Literacy Spike

May 1984

Elspeth Stuckey

The U.S.C. Literacy Spike

May 1984

"Spike" is a term used by the California Conservation Corps. It means 'work'. A team of corpsmembers goes off "on spike" to clear brush, sandbag floods or fires, clean sites, etc. At USC, for three weeks the corpsmembers spiked literacy. The way they did it and the land they cleared are the subject of this paper.

It is important to understand the impact of the participant population on the spike. In the summer 1984 experience, the 60 corpsmembers were both members of ethnic and racial minority groups and what could be described as disenfranchised white people. Many express problems in terms of psychological or emotional insecurities as opposed to, say, racial discrimination. The ethnic minority corpsmembers in the spike constituted a small minority yet even within that group literacy skills differed markedly. Literacy skills of the entire population ranged from barely literate to university level. Most of the students could read and write; most did not like to do either; many were not functionally literate.

The group as a whole was not motivated to take on tasks or initiate projects. The corpsmembers seemed to both expect and prefer a high school model wherein the teacher assigned an activity which could be done carelessly or not done at all. For the corpsmembers, making choices or modifying assignments was work without a purpose.

This general description is not applicable to all of the corpsmembers. Several took on tasks with determination, and they achieved tangible results. However, these demonstrated a truism often used to blame students for the failure of the system: if the students want to work, they will. Most of the corpsmembers, of course, did not want to work. They would not suspend a hardnosed apathy.

The instructors were graduate students at the University of Southern California who had all worked previously in the Model Literacy Project with the Los Angeles Urban Center of the California Conservation Corps. The instructors' experience in that project proved invaluable.

The three-week time frame of the literacy spike demanded two sorts of instructor capabilities: flexibility and initiative. Whereas each instructor developed strategies for the three weeks of literacy work, no instructor was able to undertake class activities without early and substantial modifications. This meant, for example, that an instructor's carefully planned syllabus or set of alternatives had to be scrapped in favor of more adaptive activities. Instructors had to maintain high levels of motivation at the same time they discovered and acted on corpsmember exigencies.

Meetings with corpsmembers occcurred in the afternoons and at night. In the afternoon, corpsmembers met in groups with instructors. Because the number of contact hours was so limited, working groups were established quickly and arbitrarily. Each instructor set up a five or six member group based on the draw.

Groups met for one hour and a half Monday through Friday in the afternoon. The Writing Center at USC, a large, open room with scattered seminar tables and chairs, provided the meeting place for most groups. Some groups met in individual classrooms while other met outside. Often, groups would assemble in the Writing Center before travelling elsewhere for particular activities.

At night on Monday through Thursday, the corpsmembers would meet for 90 minute sessions. These were held at the CCC Center and were conducted in a more traditional style. Lectures would be followed by discussions. On occasion, poetry readings or one act plays replaced lectures.

Although instructors set up their own curriculums, a general pedagogy characterized the literacy work. There was no ability grouping except in extreme cases of non-reading or non-native English speaking abilities. No pre- or post- tests were administered, and there was no testing or examining during the course of the spike. Instructors attempted very early to discover specific interests of the corpsmembers and to either integrate those interests into a general plan or to develop a unique program with the corpsmembers. Diversity characterized the work in groups as well as flexibility.

Instructors worked quietly with corpsmembers on reading and writing. There was no front or back of the room, no formal lecture in the groups. Conversation and discussion were encouraged. If the corpsmembers were unwilling or unable to work on an assignment, instructors tried to find out why rather than coerce behavior.

There was no push to quantify thus no need to justify. The goal was to create a culture for literacy in which literate activities would assume human purpose.

The three-week time span presented an interesting situation. It suggested the need to establish a baseline theme or approach quickly at the same time it required immediate adaptation to corpsmember abilities and needs. The brevity ultimately deems that all work be future directed. The day to day syllabi constituted an heuristic for discovering skills, issues, and procedures. It was important not only to discuss a particular topic via a xeroxed magazine article, say, but to explain how such and article could be obtained and how it could best be responded to.

To achieve this sort of goal, instructors relied on various mechanisms: they made use of the interview, of videos, intensive journals, newspapers, library tours. All of these forms produced substantial, durable material. The accessibility of information became apparent as did the power to describe, review, and evaluate it, as well as produce it.

Tools such as the tape recorder and typewriter were particularly useful in a three week occasion. They are expedient and allow even the weakest students to obtain bodies of information (text) to examine and deploy. Instructors often typed up a student's recorded discourse for use with reading instruction, research, etc.

Freewriting, likewise, is a way to help students begin producing. Asking corpsmembers to keep their pens moving across the page is much like asking them to speak into a recorder. Once the mechanistic novelty ceased to interfere, (if it does), corpsmembers focused on ideas and communicative intent.

On a given day during the spike, the activities of the groups appeared to differ radically from each other. One group was reading quietly around a table, another writing in journals, another discussing a magazine article or a one-act play. Several groups were viewing a video or listening to a record. Over the three weeks, each group probably did all of these things, group abilities and instructor expertise exercising selection. Their commonality proceeded from an impetus to expose the forms of porcesses of literacy.

In keeping with the purposes of small group workships, the larger events attempted to supply world knowledge in terms of its sources and uses. The following summary describes these special programs.

Hooked on Books

An array of paperback books was made available to corpsmembers early in the first week. These books were also put into the vans along with numbers of magazines. The purpose of the books was pleasure reading, though corpsmembers often made their reading the basis for work in their groups.

The Newspaper

In order that the newspaper could be available from the beginning, an instructor took the responsibility of disseminating information, soliciting submissions, typing, stapling, collating, distributing, etc. (Many of these activities would have been done by corpsmembers if time constraints had been less stringent.) The quickness with which the first paper appeared made it integral to the work going on in the workshops. The newspaper grew in size with each issue. By the end of the spike, each corpsmember had contributed an item to at least one of the newspaper editions.

Literacy PM

The evening program consisted of guest speakers who would lecture or perform for approximately an hour and then answer questions. Scientists, actresses, poets came to these evening meetings, and their contributions often provided grist for the workshop afternoon activities.

Special Events

Corpsmembers were invited to tour the Los Angeles Coliseum as it was being readied for the Olympics, to participate in jazzercise classes, to attend a session of a college class in a subject of interest (one group attended a philosophy class). These activities proved to be popular as well as enlightening: corpsmembers could see how a college course proceeded, how renovations were planned and executed on a large scale, etc.

Graduation Ceremonies

A final ceremony capped the spike. Corpsmembers read from their work, received certificates of appreciation for their efforts, and attended a picnic. The opportunity for corpsmembers to display their progress and talents for each other and to take stock of their potential is rewarding to the corpsmembers as well as to their teachers.

Observations and Recommendations

An instructor at the end of the first week of the spike voiced the central, most haunting question:

"How do you turn 20 years of social devaluation into three weeks of self-esteem?"

The corpsmembers came to the spike with varying but largely uninspired educational histories. Many expected, even demanded, to be treated like high school students in order to be relieved of control over their own studies. The corpsmembers also came to classes tired from hard work having had no time to shower, change clothes, etc. Any absenteeism in the three weeks caused problems, whether for the development of student/instructor relationships or the creation of literacy patterns.

There was, however, by the end of the second week a noticeable change in attitudes. Corpsmembers began to feel comfortable enough to request information, let their interests and needs be known, etc. The last few days reflected a rise in self-esteem of many of the corpsmembers who announced plans to seek further education, inquire about job criteria, skills training. The notion that literacy is a place you have to live in before you treat it like home was borne out again. Seeing their names and writing in print, generating a lot of pages, reading books of their onw choosing, discovering how to get information--all combined to suggest to the corpsmembers their power to define their own horizons.

Del Norte Spike Journal

Elspeth Stuckey takes the structure of the research work undertaken at the Reque Center of the California Conservation Corps, a camp on the coast at the Oregon border. Nine Model Literacy Project instructor-researchers spent a month there, teaching, listening, living at a beautiful place with sixty corpsmembers who were spending most of _their_ time in the classic CCC enterprises of trail making and trout stream clearance.

The Del Norte Spike Journal

June 1984

by Elspeth Stuckey

The Del Norte Spike Journal

June 1984

The Del Norte Program lasted for a month from 30 May to 29 June 1984. The literacy instruction was undertaken by nine graduate students from the University of Southern California, seven of whom had prior teaching experience with corpsmembers from other California Conservation Corps Centers. All nine teachers lived at the Center and functioned as a unit.

The purpose of the program was to establish a culture for literacy which could continue to grow and change on its own initiative. To that end, much effort was focused on identifying and enriching the relationship between literacy and the labor in corpsmembers lives.

The abilities and backgrounds of corpsmembers diverged widely and magnificently. In the month it became clear that no corpsmember is without significant strengths. The literacy range is from alphabetically illiterate (cannot decipher the print code) to extremely able (one corpsmember with an eighth grade education writes as well as PhD candidates). Some corpsmembers joined the C.C.C. specifically to get away from literacy activities.

The receptivity of the majority of corpsmembers to a broad curriculum was excellent. They grew comfortable with instructors to the extent that class activities veered in student directed ways. Students who had quite a bit of difficulty with the conventional codes of reading and writing were willing to use tape recorders and typewriters to produce text. The disenfranchisement which approximately 2/3 of the corpsmembers experienced from usual academic routines was voiced and validated. There is much to be learned about the schools in America from the students who failed to conform to the system.

The Program

In response to information obtained from a lengthy questionnaire about corpsmembers interests, a bi-level program of courses was set up to combine group work of a general educational nature with thematic offerings. These courses were developed at the center and proceeded from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM Monday - Thursday. Immediately prior to these courses, from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM Monday - Thursday, small groups of 4-6 corpsmembers and one instructor met to pursue topics scheduled over the four weeks. The 6:00 - 7:00 PM time slot also served as the stable basis for student evaluations of the program, questions, announcements, etc.

In addition to the formal curriculum, instructors and corpsmembers set up independent tutorials according to needs or interest. These tutorials often ran on a contract basis and were particularly useful for corpsmembers whose duties conflicted with course times.

Outside of curricular constraints altogether, instructors met with students to help with reading, give advice on job applications, conference on essay or poetry revisions, etc. The weekends were often good times for these informal sessions.

Special Projects

The Newspaper

The newspaper, named "Norte Star" by vote, provided a rich outlet for corpsmembers writing. The submissions ranged from poems to polls to weekly crew reports. Three issues of the Norte Star were published; each issue grew in size and variety.

Hooked on Books

Hooked on Books is a project which recommends the display and random distribution of paper back books to the population. The USC instructors brought $250.00 worth of books and deposited them in bins in the cafeteria. Told that these books were free for the taking, corpsmembers sifted through the titles to retrieve one or more of interest. At the end of the project, 6 paperbacks remained, but they were carried away by the end of the last day.

The Play

Rehersal notices for a performance of Jean-Claude van Itallie's Interview drew immediate response, and play practice went on the length of the month. The actors and actresses were corpsmembers, staff, and USC instructors. The play was performed on the final day of activities.

The Video

In conjunction with a course on video cameras and equipment, two USC instructors video-taped a narative of life on center for the corpsmembers and staff. The video followed the crews from physical training in the morning until their evening returns, clean-up, and course work. The edited video last for 30 minutes and was shown on the final day.

Single Events

When an instructor planned a class meeting of broad interest, open invitations were made to the community. Many corpsmembers watched McBeth, for example, when it was shown as part of a drama class. Likewise, corpsmembers with particular talents were asked to conduct special, instructional sessions. One such session was instruction in oragami which resulted in a number of paper shrimp in the ancient Vietnamese tradition.

Saturation

The unique aspect of the Del Norte Spike was the residential status of the instructors and the instructors integration into the CCC routine. The most salient example of this was the participation on the grade by USC people. Instructors did stream clearance, trail maintenance, roofing, masonry, and KP. Recreational hours spent with corpsmembers on the basketball court or at a Shakespeare festival afforded valuable opportunities to discover corpsmember interests and needs. It also furnished avenues for immediate provision of resources and suggestions.

The Final Day Celebration

To celebrate the achievement and aspirations of corpsmembers, staff, and USC instructors, a final ceremony was held over the afternoon and evening of June 29. Corpsmembers returned at lunch from the grade to complete preparations and ready their performances. The ceremonies began with corpsmembers reading their own work at a pubic reception; the awarding of certificates and patches followed. The rest of the day was spent touring exhibits of corpsmembers work--photographs, oral histories, paintings, essays, poems, video--attending the play, and attending an outdoor barbecue.

Staff Training

Staff at the Del Norte Center exemplified excellence and adaptability; working with staff meant meeting and talking and exchanging ideas with staff. Staff participated in the courses as well as team taught with USC instructors.

Observations and Recommendations

The first week of the program proved to be the watershed period. A good deal of attention was paid to schedules and questions of corpsmembers so that classes could proceed smoothly from the beginning. The USC instructors found much success in trusting to volunteerism over mandatory attendance (beyond normal CCC requirements). There were few problems with attendance, and most optional classes contained a full contingent of interested corpsmembers. By the end of the program, students were more than willing to undertake peer tutoring (several volunteered to help others and asked instructors for materials), to ask for information from the curriculum staff, and to reconsider the importance of literacy in their lives.

It is clearly the case, however, that to propogate successful literacy programs at a Center, the student/staff ratio must be low. The best curricular work done during the month was highly personalized, often intense, and regular. The number of instructors from USC favored this circumstance. But even innovative pedagogy cannot replace a sufficient number of staff to conduct a program that is both progressive and reflective.

The uses of literacy in the Corps are many. There is ample opportunity for corpsmembers to read and write for functional and expressive purposes. Corpsmembers involvement with tasks increases with their awareness of the nature and consequences of their actions. Access to background reading in various genres, verbal and written responses to daily activites. engagement in long-range planning, and participation in wider opportunities for interpersonal and center communication networks will create an environment for human life, not just human training.

Epistemology of the Oppressed: A Theoretical Analysis of Workplace Literacy

"The Epistemology of the Oppressed" is another essay from the literacy seminar. It reports three studies performed by Emily Hicks with other instructor-researchers of the Model Literacy project and corpsmembers. It is particularly interesting to see the adaptation of the methodology first used more than thirty years ago with the Authoritarian Personality project applied in this quite different setting.

Emily Hicks is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at San Diego State University. She is a critic and translator with special interests in the writing of women in Latin America.

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE OPPRESSED:
A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE LITERACY

Emily Hicks

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE OPPRESSED:

A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE LITERACY

As a point of entry into a critical inquiry into the relationship between literacy and the larger issues of class, sex and race, some current theories of the social role of language are relevant. From the superimposition of models in this area a model of the epistemological process of workplace literacy emerges.[1] The pedagogical implications of this model suggest that a critical perspective and digital literacy[2] rather than standard English grammar should be the aim of workplace literacy programs. My own reformulation of the problem of workplace literacy developed out of my experience as a teacher in the University of Southern California Model Literacy Program. It became increasingly clear to me that in an information-based society such as the United States, it is more effective to teach critical and digital thought than it is to teach grammar. This conclusion proceeds from a view of language as a fluid, changing system, an intertextual system that shifts with every thought, written word and spoken utterance.

The USC Model Literacy Program took place on the USC campus during the academic year 1983-84. Students were working in the California Conservation Corps, the CCC, during the time they participated in the program. Teachers were selected from faculty members and teaching assistants in the literature and linguistics departments. The student-teacher ratio was about six to one. It was the hypothesis of this study that the cultural differences between students, who were Black, Hispanic, ethnic Chinese Vietnamese and Vietnamese from working class and poor backgrounds, and teachers, who were white and middle class, created an interference pattern. This interference pattern is the recording of the shape of the dialogue or interaction.[3] The metaphor is useful because it does not privilege either of the two perspectives or reference beams. It provides a means of conceptualizing the shape of the interaction between the student and the teacher. As can be seen in Table 1, unless they have the same reference beams, the student will not be able to understand the teacher. The notion of the interference pattern emerged after consideration of the work of composition theorist Stephen Krashen, whose model of the affective filter attempts to provide a descriptive device for understanding the situation in which the California Conservation Corps students found themselves: even after repeated exposure to literacy skills, they had not learned. According to Krashen, this is because they had not had enough exposure to comprehensible input and they had effectively filtered out the information they were to receive. The shape of this filter and how to get through it is a concern of Krashen's in _Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning_ (Oxford: Pergamon, 1981). This study is concerned with two barriers, the student's and the teacher's. Even after repeated exposure to students from cultures that deviate from the norm, many teachers have still not learned from their students. They have effectively filtered out the information they could have received.

At this point, it became clear that it was necessary for both teachers and students to listen to one another.[4] The starting point of this study, then, was that cultural differences created different reference beams that could negatively affect communication. By changing the reference beams, the interference pattern could be altered. A pedagogical system based on feedback from both students and teachers which was able to gradually bring the reference beams into alignment, that is, an open dialogue between students and teachers, could result in communication between teachers and students of very different backgrounds.

Students from the USC film school enrolled in the Freshman Writing Program were used as a control group. The curriculum of this highly select group was designed to prepare them for careers in television and film. It was thought that their deviation from the norm, their unusual talent and creativity would provide an interesting basis for comparison with the CCC students.

Students and teachers were tested with questions from the F scale developed in a study undertaken by the Institute of Social Research, headed by philosopher Theodor Adorno, and the Berkeley public Opinion Study. The results of the study were published in 1950 in The Authoritarian Personality. Sixteen questions were selected.[5] Six CCC members, six teachers and fourteen film school students were tested. CCC members were evaluated with two tests not given to the control group, a computerized aptitude test, Eureka, and a class project, the writing of a play about the CCC.

The results of the F scale were analyzed according to a revised set of criteria derived from the original analyses of Adorno's study. The differences in historical context were taken into account. The original testing was done with students from USC and UCLA: Anti-semitism was a major focus. In this study with CCC members, authoritarian attitudes of teachers and CCC students was the focus. Of the six CCC students, four were black and two Hispanic. The analysis of results included comparisons of black, Hispanic, male and female CCC students; white male and female teachers; and black, Hispanic, Asian and white male and female students in the control group.

The results of the F-scale test are more meaningful when considered as indicators of the reference beam. A brief digression at this point will allow a more detailed description of the reference beam. An interference pattern is created each time the student speaks to the teacher and each time the teacher speaks to the student. If the teacher's reference beam differs from the student's, the teacher will misunderstand the student. If the student's reference beam differs from the teacher's, the student will misunderstand what the teacher is saying. Although the model does not allow precise measurement of the reference beam, the responses to the F scale questions at least allow us to isolate similar codes. The configuration of these codes determines the angle of the reference beam. Imagine that the teacher received all of her or his information from one satellite orbiting the earth. It produced all of the codes of the reference beam. The proper alignment of the student's satellite dish would allow the student to get the same information. The notion that these epistemological orids or reference beams could ever match is merely a theoretical construct, but it allows us to imagine an optimum situation. If the satellite carried non-authoritarian programs, there would be no authoritarian codes. The teacher could build the ego strength of the student and encourage the development of a democratic perspective.

the center of a circular track. A camera proceeds along the track until it has recorded information about the object from every possible viewpoint around the track. If we were able to view all of these perspectives at once, we would have a multi-dimensional perspective of the object. No particular perspective would be privileged. Unlike the authoritarian personality, constituted by a narrow, partial perspectives, our perspective would be democratic. Democratic dialogue occurs when conversation is able to fill in the missing gaps in the track around the object. Both speakers are open enough to ask questions of each other until more and more degrees of information about the object are recorded.

It is now clear why the most problematic relationship between reference beams is the one we have designated as different, particularly when there is a difference of more than three points on the mean score of one of the eight sub-scales and the difference is in the upper range. In the upper range, the relationship is problematic because it indicates that both teacher and student have very narrow perspectives in addition to very different perspectives. The probability of either desiring to see or being capable of seeing the other's point of view is very low.

The results of the F-scale test are significant in the context of the holographic model of communication. On the DEST-CYN sub-scale, as can be seen in Table 2, White Female teachers and Black Male students in the CCC scored more than three 3.0 apart and Black Male students scored in the upper half of the range. Out of a possible 8.0 points, they scored 1.0 and 5.25 respectively. This disparity indicates a problem in communication between these two groups. In fact, Black

DESTRUCTION/CYNICISM sub-scale, as can be seen in Table 2.. They scored 3.3 and 6.5. Black Female students scored in the upper half of the range. White Male teachers have fewer restrictions on the satisfaction of their needs in comparison to Black Female students. The difference in scores between White Male teachers and Hispanic male students in the CCC was not great enough to be categorized as different. They scored 3.33 and 4.5. It is possible that Hispanic Male students in the CCC believe they have fewer restrictions than Black Male students in the CCC perceive. There is also an indication of DIFFERENT reference beams according to the results of the AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION sub-scale between the scores of White Female and White Male teachers, both scoring 0.0, and Black Female students, who placed themselves in the upper range with a score of 5.5. The problem for teachers arises when students are found to be "overdoing" in the direction of respect, obedience, and gratitude. One teacher in the program complained about the obsequiousness of one of his Black Female students in the CCC.

This basic pattern is repeated in the relationship between White Female teachers and Black Female students in the CCC on the sub-scale of DESTRUCTION/CYNICISM. As shown in Table 2, they scored 1.0 and 6.5. Black Female students scored in the upper half of the range. Different reference beams were also indicated by scores on the AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION sub-scale. The score of the White Female teachers, 0.0, was more than 3.0 points lower than the score of the Black Female students (5.5). These results are in keeping with the observation by teachers that students were overly respectful and obedient. Some students asked the teachers for grammar exercises.

Many students were unduly concerned with pleasing the teacher. Another set of DIFFERENT scores was found between White Male teachers and Hispanic Male students in the CCC on the AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION sub-scale. As show in Table 3, they scored 0.0 and 3.0. Hispanic Male students in the CCC were in fact overly submissive to teachers.

Considering these results together, it is clear that teachers must be wary of over-obedience and seek to strengthen the egos of the students rather than encourage submissive behavior. Teachers also need to understand the cynical and destructive attitudes of the students. They can do this by talking to students and by tracing the steps that have led to cynical stances.

SIMILAR reference beams or perspectives can be a starting point for communication, particularly if the scores on sub-scales are in the lower half of the range. In other words, fairly open teachers and students with similar perspectives stand a good chance of communicating with one another. SIMILAR reference beams were indicated by scores on the sub-scales STEREOTYPY/SUPERSTITION and ANTI-INTRACEPTION.

On the STEREOTYPY/SUPERSTITION sub-scale, shown in Table 4, the scores of White Female teachers were SIMILAR to those of Black Male students in the CCC, that is, 2.0 and 2.5 out of 4.0 possible points. These students and teachers are in a position to begin to discuss stereotyping. The teachers, however, should be aware that they are not free from prejudice in this area and that the Black Male CCC students did score in the upper range. The first step for teachers would be to discuss their own attitudes with each other. White Male teachers and Hispanic Male male students in the CCC also scored similarily, 1.3 and 1.0, although in this case students scored lower than teachers. Both teachers and students scored in the lower half of the range. One interpretation of these results is that the ego of the student has not given up nor resigned itself to its fate (Adorno, p. 165). This is remarkable given the differences in actual possibilities for fulfillment between Hispanic Male students in the CCC and White Male teachers in terms of job possibilities.

On the sub-scale of CONVENTIONALISM, it is important to remember the findings of Adorno's study (p. 159). It was found that in spite of the widely held hypothesis that fascism is a middle class phenomenon, and that those who conform most to middle class culture will be the most prejudiced, in fact, the relationship is more complex; not all conventional people are prejudiced. White Male teachers and Black Female students in the CCC scored similarly on sub-scale of CONVENTIONALISM (.67, 1.0), as shown in Table 6. Adorno found two reasons for convention attitudes that explain his findings. Conventional attitudes may either be externally imposed or an expression of a fully established individual conscience. While it is possible that the White Male teachers have chosen to conform to middle class culture, it is probable that CCC students have not. CCC students probably conform because of externally imposed conditions, such as the desire for success in a society in which middle class culture is the norm. Teachers in the program remarked on the conventionalism of two participants. One was a teacher and one was a CCC student.

MATCHING reference beams were indicated by the scores of White Female teachers and Black Female students in the CCC on the sub-scale of CONVENTIONALISM (1.0, 1.0) as shown in Table 6. Scores were in the lower half of the range. It must be asked if the reasons for this conventionalism were the same in both cases, or if conventional attitudes were imposed externally in the case of CCC students.

A set of MATCHING reference beams was indicated by the scores of White Male teachers and Hispanic Male students on the sub-scale of ANTI-INTRACEPTION, as shown in Table 5. In Adorno's study, "intraception" is defined as "the dominance of feelings, fantasies, speculations, aspirations--an imaginative, subjective, human outlook" (p. 164) It is interesting that the scores, 2.0, 2.0 were mid-range. Thus, not only were Hispanic Male CCC students not particularly anti-intraceptive, but to the extent that they did display anti-intraceptive tendencies, they were matched by the scores of their White Male teachers. Related findings showed White Male students in the control group were SIMILAR in their scores on the POWER/TOUGH sub-scale (Table 7) to the scores of Hispanic Male and Black Male CCC students (1.3, 1.5; 1.3, 1.25). Even more surprising for those who believe that Hispanic Male students are overly concerned with maintaining an image of toughness will be the finding that White Female students in the control group and Hispanic Male students in the CCC scored similarly 1.0, 1.5 on the POWER/TOUGH sub-scale. These scores fell in the lower half of the range. This finding is significant given the White Female middle class feminist concern with "machismo." The scores reflect a similar preoccupation with dominance and submission. On the POWER/TOUGH sub-scale, White Female teachers and Hispanic Male students in the CCC scores 0, 3.0. These scores indicate DIFFERENT reference beams. Thus, although White Female teachers scored significantly lower than Hispanic Male students in the CCC, the scores of the CCC students were similarly to those of White

Male teachers. An effective feminist strategy would have to be concerned with both the authoritarian attitudes of White Male teachers and Hispanic Male students.

A pattern emerges when these results are considered together: a weak ego results in a cynical view of humankind and in authoritarian submissive behavior. In terms of literacy, this means the notion of the subject must be grounded in experience in the world in the understanding of the student . In its actions, the student/subject must experience a more equitable and more democratic division of power. Teachers of literacy must make sure that they educate themselves about cultures different from their own. They can help the process of individuation and ego strength by avoiding stereotyping. An investigation of their own adherence to middle class values and norms is a good place to begin to develop a critical perspective of the values of their students. Even the assumption that academic culture is middle class must be examined. It may just be archaic. That is, in terms of cultural heoemony, MTV (Music Television) has usurped the position of what was once considered the middle class norm.

Analysis of the results of the aptitude test, EUREKA, produced one finding of interest in relation to the F scale results. On the item concerning the desire to work with others, only two students wanted to work with others, while the rest preferred to work alone. All students agreed that they wanted jobs with change. The structure of the CCC demands that corpsmembers work with others. The biggest complaint CCC students had was that they were treated unfairly in comparison with other corpsmembers. CCC students did report that the

CCC provided a lot of variety and change in jobs due to the many work sites.

The collectively written play about life in the CCC was analyzed and correlated with scores on the F scale using Roland Barthes' five codes.[6] Dean, who created the role of SUPERVISOR for herself, tells another corpsmember, "You got to work your way up" (that is, one must work one's way up through the organization). She scored high on AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION. The acceptance of a situation in which one has to work one's way up is a manifestation of a submissive, uncritical attitude towards idealized authorities, in this case, CCC leadership. Dean's responses to F scale questions expressed authoritarian tendencies in areas covered by seven of the eight subscales. The lines she wrote for her character were based on the REFERENCE code. By choosing to play the part of SUPERVISOR, she has identifed herself with the norm. Byron, although he scored high on AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION, chose the role of CREW LEADER and is critical of the norm. The character he created says, "Just because you're up there, it's unfair because you don't want me, the mighty crew leader, to work his way up and push the supervisor out the door." Byron has discovered a basic contradiction in the ideology of working one's way up. In real life, Byron was being pressured by CCC leadership to become a red hat, one step above regular corpsmembers. He expressed the viewpoint in class that red hats were merely the dupes of leadership, tricked into squealing on their friends and coworkers by the promise of power. Byron does have a critical attitude towards authority. He may believe in the hierarcy, and merely object to injustice, that is, the SUPERVISOR'S unwillingness to let him work is way up more quickly, or he may be genuinely critical of the code itself. He also scored high on the sub-scale of DEST/CYN. This sub-scale measures attitudes of peneralized hostility and vilification of humankind. Eddie, who scored low on AUTHORITARIAN SUBMISSION, created a role that mediated between leadership and corpsmembers, the role of PHYSICAL FITNESS LEADER. His character says, "Nobody does PT." Physical fitness is called "PT," an abbreviation for "physical therapy." The form of expression is a complaint, not a command. He also makes a joke about how the SUPERVISOR got her job: "The reason she got it is because she went out with Walt for steaks and cakes." There is more humor than aggression in this comment. Byron has the same complaint, but he expresses it with hostility: "The way I feel about it, if it wasn't for her looks she'd be out the door." The ACTION code and the HERMENEUTIC code coincide in the last line of the script: "And you're wrote up. Docked!!" The SUPERVISOR decides not to take any more backtalk from Byron. The enigma, whether or not the SUPERVISOR will strike back, is resolved when she takes action and docks Byron's pay.

I gave open-ended questions to teachers about their methods. All of the teachers based their pedagogy on some form of individualized instruction. None emphasized grammar, although several taught grammar to students who asked to be instructed about some specific problems in writing. All teachers appreciated the opportunity to work with small groups of students. It was generally agreed that six to eight students was the optimum number for successful interaction.

The results of the study indicate that a dialogue can occur between teachers and students of very different backgrounds. The emphasis on the development of a critical perspective rather than grammar was found to be preferred by all teachers in the program. It is clear that the ability to write is correlated with a critical perspective in this group of students.

The pedagogical implications of this study are: first, that the reference beams of students who differ from the cultural norm of what academics define as middle class values demand highly individualized instruction; second, that literacy programs should provide a framework in which students may consider work and its relationship to literacy; and third, that cultural differences may create a space for utopian dialogue.[7] Teachers need to educate themselves about the lives of their students in the workplace. They need to reexamine their own attitudes about their students. That is, they must be literate themselves in order to teach literacy. In their attitude towards students, they need to avoid stereotypes, respect perspectives that differ from their definitions of middle class norms, maintain a critical attitude towards authority and support the imaginations of their students.

Literacy is a thought process. Literacy in a democratic society is a democratic thought process. It avoids stereotypes. It does not adhere rigidly to middle class norms with disregard for other perspectives. It does not have a submissive, uncritical attitude towards authority, nor does it oppose the imaginative. It is not preoccupied with the leader-follower dynamic, nor does it exaggerate the assertion of strength and toughness. Neither destructive nor cynical, it is not overly concerned with the sexual activities of others.[8]

The definition of literacy as a democratic thought process draws upon the work of Frankfurt theorists on anti-democratic tendencies in Western culture. Adorno, in The Authoritarian Personality, provides a critical method of documentary research. Horkheimer, in his discussion of means and ends in The Eclipse of Reason, provides a context in which to consider the ends as well as the means of literacy. In an information-based society, thought itself is a commodity. Thought and reason, historically held to be components of literacy, have become instrumentalized. Literacy defined as a democratic thought process provides a possible means of opposing the commodification of all though.

Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford in collaboration with Betty Aron, Maria Hertz Levinson, William Morrow, *The Authoritarian Personality*, abr. ed. (American Jewish Committee, 1950, rpt. New York: Norton, 1982), p. 155.

[6] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, pref. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

[7] Ernest Bloch, " Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics," *New German Critique* (Spring, 1977), p. 22.

[8] Adorno, p. 157.

An Account of the Initial Phase of the Model Literacy Project

DeDe Gallow's evaluation of the first phase of the Model Literacy Project presents some of the strengths and weaknesses of our initial attempt to work with corpsmembers. Like Doug Cazort, DeDe Gallow is both a novelist and a specialist in educational research.

An Account of the Initial Phase (Summer, 1983) of the Model Literacy Project: An Adult Education Perspective

DeDe Gallow

An Account of the Initial Phase (Summer, 1983) of the Model Literacy Project: An Adult Education Perspective

As an adult education program, the initial phase of the Model Literacy Project was unique. For one thing, it was built almost entirely around the participants. Although it began at the ungodly hour of 7:30 a.m., it was incorporated into part of the corpsmembers' work day. It was also accesible since the University of Southern California is just down the street from the Los Angeles Urban Center. Even if it were not, the C.C.C. would have provided transportation. This point is particularly important since many of the corpsmembers did not have cars and Los Angeles is not known for the excellence of its public transportation system. It is quite common for morning rush hour buses to pass by bus stops without stopping. Instead of having to get up even earlier than they already did in order to catch a bus, the Corpsmembers walked over to U.S.C. as a group.

Since the program took place on a university campus, the environment was also geared towards young adults. Instead of being forced to sit at tiny desks designed for children or high school students, the U.S.C. Writing Center provided large tables and chairs. The Center was also equipped with a coffee pot, food was often brought by some of the teachers, and students were free to get up and use the restrooms down the hall. Study carrels were also available if a student wished to work alone. Audio visual equipment equipment was provided and the language laboratory, just a few doors away, was also used. The lab proved especially helpful with students who had the greatest anxiety about writing. Doug Cazort's group often taped what they wanted to say and Doug would then transcribe the tape. This gave the group the opportunity to see their own words in writing, thereby reinforcing that what they had to say was important enough to write down. It also helped them experience some success in reading; the words on the page were already familiar to them and the motivation to read strengthened (Spitzer, 1975). This technique also worked well with Judith Rodby's English As a Second Language group. Even students who were not transcribing stories were at least allowed to pick reading materials on subjects which interested them. For example, Irene Clark worked with a few students who were considered non-readers. By choosing books on sports, these students made great progress in a short time. The implication here is also that the students were probably more capable of reading than they were aware. By allowing them the freedom to choose materials and to experience success with them in a safe and private environment, the student's self-confidence was strenghtened.

Self-confidence is extremely important in adult education. Many adult learners either have never experienced much success with school or are returning to school after a lenghty absence. They may be returning as a job requirement or for their own betterment. In either case, anxiety is usually high. Many adults, including the corpsmembers, do not place a high premium on what they have learned on their own and therefore feel that their knowledge is not applicable in a school situation. In fact, if learning is defined broadly as "sustained, highly deliberate efforts to learn knowledge or skill," ninety-eight percent of adults can be considered active learners (Tough, 1971). The teachers in the Project made a point of emphasizing the knowledge the corpsmembers already possessed in life experience, the schooling they had completed, hobbies they engaged in, and what they were learning in the C.C.C. As adults they were given a great deal of the responsibility for what they wanted to learn. Many of the students were surprised to be asked their opinions and many remained silent for a time. Eventually, as the students realized the teachers were willing to learn from them, their confidence increased. This very humanistic approach was pervasive in the program. Instructors used discussion and what came out of the students' writing to help the students recognize their accomplishments and their potential.

Instructors were also willing to share something of themselves with the students. One of the scariest things about writing is self-exposure. It was only fair that if the students were asked to reveal things about themselves, the teachers should also. My group was particularly interested and amazed that my background was similar to theirs. Initially all they saw was a well-dressed, blue-eyed blonde. The first time we met, I went around the table asking each of the four men where they came from. When they learned that I came from a lower-class, predominately Hispanic neighborhood, there was a noticeable lessening of anxiety. One student commented, "If you can get this far, so can I!"

While coming from a similar background as the students we serve is helpful, it is certainly not a requirement. Many of the teachers admitted they had no experience with the students' lifestyles. In a sense, this made the students the experts in this area and they were eager to teach the instructors.

With the exception of the instructors, everyone in the summer Project was a member of the C.C.C., a fact important to the success of the program. This superstructure took care of the discipline, in that attendance in the Project was mandatory. Uncooperative behavior was subject to punishment, which ultimately might lead to dismissal from the Corps. The students were also bound together by their common work experience. A frequent topic of conversation in the groups was the difficulty of the work they did or complaints about the Corps. This made great fodder for some of the students' best writing. To some extent, the program was an outlet for some of their work frustration and fortunately the students felt comfortable enough with the instructors to discuss it either verbally or in print. This was one of the advantages of the teachers not being members of the C.C.C. Also, the fact that the teachers weren't members gave the students one more area of expertise, and explaining the workings of the Corps was another opportunity for exposition.

While the commeraderie within the Corps was important, it was equally important to make the corpsmembers feel a part of the campus. Unfortunately, there was really no interaction between the corpsmembers and the regular student body. This was due in part to the decreased enrollment in the summer and the early hour of the Model Literacy Project. Even if there had been an opportunity for interaction, the C.C.C. uniforms immediately set the group apart. In an effort to make the corpsmembers feel they had a right to be at U.S.C., we provided folders with the university logo on them. The students were quite proud of these folders. Small gestures of welcome such as this should not be overlooked.

The Project also tried to provide reading materials for the students. The corpsmembers often made long trips in the C.C.C. vans to work sites and the instructors saw this as a perfect reading opportunity. The vans were equipped with magazines (from People to Newsweek to National Geographic) and books were available at the Writing Center and through the teachers who either brought their own books from home or checked out books from the university library for the students. Reading material was not censured in any way; the goal was simply to get students to read voluntarily.

According to the standards of adult education researchers Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), Chickering (1981), and Cross (1982), the Model Literacy Project was quite sound in that it was fairly rich in resources, had trained teachers, was accessible geographically and temporally, had a motivated and fairly homogeneous student body, and was learner-centered. It did, however, have its drawbacks.

Although the teachers were highly trained and experienced in teaching composition to young adults, none was specifically trained in basic literacy. This may have worked to the program's advantage, however, because of the instructor's willingness to learn from students. What the instructors were most familiar with was rhetorical theory, which concentrated on the writing process rather than writing correctness. An emphasis on grammar and mechanical perfection had been partly responsible for the student's disinterest in writing in the first place. This knowledge was a benefit then, although initially the students were a little confused by the lack of grammar drills. Some even felt a little cheated. However, as they came to respect what they had to say, a natural drive for the correctness which would help them communicate their message more effectively and powerfully took hold. In my own group, if a student specifically asked about a grammar rule, then I told him -- and only then. In many cases what prompted the student's question in the first place was their awareness that a sentence didn't "sound" right, an indication that the student had actually internalized many of the grammar rules, a fact I never failed to point out. (This recognition of what the students knew instinctively is based on the work of Peter Elbow (1973), Donald Murray (1960), Frank Smith (1982), Janet Emig (1975), and others.) However, there was another, more important psychological reason for rewarding the students' instinctive knowledge. William Labov (1972), one of the first theoretical linguists to take dialects such as Black English seriously as rule-governed and bona fide language, has stressed the importance of what he calls "club membership." This refers to students feeling they are a member of a literacy club, a club which can use Standard Written English when necessary. It is proposed that once one feels part of a group, the distinction between being functionally literate, which 97% of the Corpsmembers were, and what Holzman (1984) refers to as being culturally literate takes place. The goal in cultural literacy is to use literacy spontaneously to learn, solve problems, and for enjoyment, thereby removing literacy from its association as an exclusively job-related task.

Most teachers at the elementary and high school levels have not taught writing this way (although this is beginning to change). Neither is the public familiar with the notion of generating the writing first and working on correctness last. This is important since education tends to be in the hands of the lay public and not professionals (Millington, 1984). The public and most secondary teachers frequently believe writing and reading should be taught via grammar drills and vocabulary tests. They tend to make reading and writing what the teacher assigns. Most of the teachers cannot be faulted. Training in the teaching of writing is often neglected in teacher education programs, the belief often being that if one speaks English one should be able to write and therefore teach it. Without any information to the contrary, teachers often rely on textbooks which perpetuate the problem. Of course, many teachers do feel that grammar and correctness are of primary importance. In contrast, composition researchers Krashen (1984) and Holzman (1984) would go so far as to claim that grammar cannot be taught at all, but only acquired through reading and writing.

Fundamentally, I agree with the conclusions of current composition research. However, there are a few realities which need to be taken into consideration. First, regarding grammar instrution, it has to be remembered that composition researchers will not be doing the hiring when literacy program graduates go looking for jobs. Rather, people who subscribe to the general belief that correctness is foremost will. This is a reality. While the longevity of a language is dependent on its ability to adapt, the rules of our language are what make it possible for us to communicate effectively in the written medium. This takes many years of practive to acquire and is a skill one only progresses at and never perfects. Most adults in continuing education programs don't have that kind of time if their immediate goal is to become more employable. Just how grammar can be incorporated into the program without souring the students' passion to communicate is unclear, but it should not be left totally to chance. Teachers should probably not start a beginning composition class with grammar, but it should be part of a literacy program.

Second, the issue of club membership emotionality. As pointed out in Chickering (1981), one of the reasons for the failure of many literacy programs is the assumption that all and only good things come with literacy, most specifically better employment. Literacy *is* a good thing, but it does not always lead to aconomic gain, popularity, or rapier wit. As the general public becomes more highly educated, those in adult education programs are just beginning to gain the rudiments of filling out employment applications. This may be an incredible stride in a Third World nation where illiteracy is the norm, but not in countries like the United States where literacy is taken for granted. In addition, it begins to dawn on the students at some point that there is a vast amount of information they've yet to learn just to be average. Many of these students are well aware that college graduates are having trouble getting jobs. This can be devastating and certainly doesn't provide the motivation necessary to stick with a literacy program. Even if a student does stick with it, there is the potential for anomie. I propose that the beginning literacy student will first go through a honeymoon period (much as our C.C.C. group did) with that first flush of success in being able to read a paragraph or write a sentence. Once the student learns the basics, however, there is a greater awareness of the volume of material yet to learn and enjoy. At this point the adult literacy student is stuck between two worlds. Not wholly "literate," but no longer "illiterate," insecurity and frustration may set in. I also believe that the student, if she decides to continue in the program, goes through a mourning period for the way of life she is leaving. While the goal of the literacy program should be to make the student multi-dialectical, one is different when one is literate. In Labov's work, those students who were literate were called "lames" by their peers and ostracized from the cliques so important to youths. Even though the Model Literacy Project encouraged use of the student's own dialect, the very act of writing one's thoughts and feelings instead of telling them or acting them out is suspect unless it is in the form of grafiti.

There is also the issue of writing as a punitive act. Not only are writing assignments used to punish students in shcool, but the Corpsmembers in particular faced being "written up," a disciplinary act which is a written record of misbehaviour and might lead to being fired. Unfortunately, most people are more familiar with the negative power of writing than the positive. Writing on the job of this nature is usually associated with higher-ups, positions most adult literacy students feel they will never reach.

Literacy programs often receive a great deal of attention, and U.S.C.'s was no exception. This attention brings with it the possibility of exploitation, often a necessary evil for funding. There was a great deal of concern in the Model Literacy Project that the Corpsmembers know that the program was for them and not for the glorification of U.S.C. Since the teachers' services were at first voluntary and U.S.C. had commited itself to providing many of the resources, exploitation for the purposes of funding was not really an issue. Publicity was also kept at a minimum. While this was good for the students, it was also bad. This overconcern shot down the suggestion that students make use of the resources of U.S.C.'s affiliation with the John Tracy Clinic which could have provided inexpensive if not free hearing screening. U.S.C.'s health Center could have also provided vision testing. It made little sense to frustrate both students and teachers in learning to read and write if there was a visual or hearing acuity problem. Everyone should have a baseline hearing and vision test, yet this was not done with the excuse that it might make the students feel there was something wrong with them. Even the suggestion that the teachers be tested at the same time to reinforce this health education tip was ignored. Similarly, a proposal to enlist the services of the School of Education's Reading Clinic also fell by the wayside. In effect, Corpsmembers were being denied accessible and inexpensive health screening and professional services.

Most adult education programs are resource and power poor. This was not really the case with the Model Literacy Project and yet many valuable resources were not utilized. Granted, the program was put together hastilly and we all learned as we went along. During the summer, many of the people who could help make things happen were also not available, but services which could be beneficial should not be overlooked due to professional territorialism and jealousies. Neither should we ignore polling the students on what their feelings might be about a screening test, whether it be an academic or health one.

The seriousness of the transition from "illiteracy" to "literacy" should not be overlooked, either. Most students and teachers in literacy programs are very enthusiastic, a happy and fortunate occurence for any education program. However, this enthusiasm often blinds us to the negative effects of literacy. Since writing is such a personal act--one which requires insight and the ability to risk self-exposure--the use of counseling techniques in literacy programs might be advisable. The empathy and ability to encourage the student writer's thought and feelings is important, as is smoothing the transition to being culturally literate. As heretical as it sounds, it should also be kept in mind that literacy may in fact not be the best thing for all students.

Based on the above information, the following generalizations and recommendations can be made:

1) It is good to have a plan for the day's lesson, but it should be tailored to the students and even shelved if a learning situation comes up naturally. This way the less self-directed students don't get the impression that the entire responsibility for the lesson is on them, but gives the more self-directed students the freedom to determine their own learning;

2) Individual and small group learning at best because of the attention it affords the student. The physical proximity decreases the formality, as well as difference between teacher and student roles. This was possible because of the number of students and teachers available, but it might not be in other programs;

3) Treat the student with respect. It requires a great deal of ingenuity in compensatory behavior to function in a literate society when one is not considerate literate. An obvious but often overlooked point is to work from strengths. This requires the teacher to redefine his or idea of intelligence and learning;

4) Use all available resources: texts, materials, facilities, and mostly people. Adult education programs do not have the luxury of professional jealousies;

5) Some sort of grammar workshop should be designed for the program;

6) Use materials of the students' choice, but do not overlook their need for guidance in this area. For some it is important that you take control, otherwise, if there really isn't a difference between being educated (the teacher) and not (the student), why should they learn?

7) Try to determine the informal structure among the students themselves. An esprit de corps is very important. In the C.C.C. this was a little easier to determine. In other groups it might require the teacher to stick around during breaks to observe the interaction among the students;

8) Vary the writing assignments: plays, video scripts, newspapers, literary magazines, short stories, poetry, letters, resume.

RESOURCES

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Teacher as Homeboy: A British View of the Model Literacy Program

Jane MacKillop offers us a transatlantic critique of the Model Literacy Program, while using her experiences in Los Angeles as a vantage point for reflections on her work in her hometown of Sheffield, England, where she teaches ESL.

Teacher as Homeboy

A British View of the Model Literacy Program

Jane MacKillop

Teacher as Homeboy

A British View of the Model Literacy Program

My involvement with the Model Literacy Program was purely accidental. I was on a year's leave of absence from my post as an ESL Tutor/Co-ordinator with the Adult Education Service in Sheffield, England, and was working as an instructor for the Freshman Writing Program at the University of Southern California. When I heard about the program for the California Conservation Corpsmembers I wanted to see at close hand how the universal problems of teaching literacy were being tackled at USC. I was curious about how methods differed from English ones and what the instructors' approaches would be.

Initially I was bowled over by the language. This isn't an unusual phenomenon for English and American speakers of apparently the same tongue but in this instance it was less how things were said than that they were said at all. In England we are diffident about describing what matters to us as teachers and what affects those we teach. It is unthinkable that we would write of a literacy program:

> "It is a mutually respectful endeavour in which knowledgeable adults who are qualified to teach strive to help . . . activate existing literacy skills and (help corpsmembers) become aware of themselves as worthy of further intellectual development. This further development is necessary both for their expansion as human beings and for economic and social reasons."

as Olga Connolly did of the Model Literacy Program, at USC. The program was founded on "trust, love of life and a belief in human potential," according to Olga. I endorsed every word but could never imagine describing a literacy program in those terms myself. Whilst this might be a case of California hype meets British reserve I suspected it was more. The instructors did not discuss how they were planning to teach phonics, nor which language arts textbook they would be using. There was no mention of how to teach grammar, nor punctuation, no reference to a composition rhetoric. Whilst there was a great deal of talk about treating corpsmembers as individuals I soon realised this did not mean allowing them to choose their own topics as they worked through a particular scheme or letting them develop literacy skills at their own pace. Nor do I mean that the whole outfit was a shambles and no-one knew what they were doing. No, the program seemed more sophisticated than any I had come across. It worked on the assumption that both teacher and student were intelligent people, wanting to communicate, rather than that there are a number of skills that have to be transferred from one head to another in the quickest and most efficient way. If literacy is about communicating ideas and information, what better way to develop it than by those involved sharing what they know?

In the absence of "teacher proof" materials and a program syllabus as such, each group of corpsmembers decided with their instructor what the format of the class should be. This kind of close teacher-student relationship is frequently experienced by the academic high-flyer, either in special classes or private tuition or by simply being on the teacher's wave-length more than the rest of his peers. It is much rarer for the mediocre student or the low-achiever to be singled out in this way. These poorer students are those most likely to join the Conservation Corps and few, if any, of the corpsmembers had been treated like this by teachers before.

Some of the corpsmembers are alphabetically illiterate and needed to learn decipherment and inscription from scratch. Most were "functionally illiterate." This means they could read and write up to eight grade and some even had their high school diplomas, but their environment was one in which books had no place. In most cases it was a question of activating existing literacy skills by showing them that literacy was relevant to them and would increase their access to other choices. For some, joining the Conservation Corps had already changed their lives. They spoke of it as one might describe a religious conversion. Frequently these were the corpsmembers whose upbringing in the ghetto had been particularly brutal. By putting on the CCC uniform they had chosen to become part of an organization that promised them "dirty backbreaking work that no-one will thank you for," and minimum pay. They had been promised that "the most important skill you will learn is how to work hard." On top of this, the Model Literacy program was daring them to meet a new challenge.

Partly because attendance was obligatory, the instructors found at first that they were pushed into traditional "us" and "them" roles. These are situations in which the student always wins since s/he has the option of sullenly not doing anything s/he does not like. The Model Literacy Program was seeking education by negotiation, so that neither side would lose out or lose face, a "win-win" situation. To achieve this many instructors started off each class with a "rap session" which cleared the air and established that this was not high school. The actual class content varied from one morning to the next, depending on what emerged from the rap-session, and on current events at home, at the LA Urban Center and in the world outside USC and the CCC. Two examples of external events or attitudes affecting what went on in the classtime spring to mind. Malathion is a pesticide which is sprayed on fruit trees in Southern California to kill the Mexican fruit-fly. It is thought to be harmful to human well-being and as a result the spraying was bitterly opposed by residents of the areas of L.A. that were sprayed and those downwind. It did not escape the corpsmembers' notice that these areas had the least political and economic power and the discussion led to a radical review of their own political thinking.

Another morning, an article about the CCC and the Literacy Program in the LA Reader prompted some angry reflections about racial stereotyping. One particular corpsmember formulated his query as follows:

> Why, on the strength of a few, are all Mexicans typified as gang-banging, hanging out on street corners, endlessly fixing ancient automobiles, sniffing cocaine and taking "angel dust" and abandoning their wives and children, whilst Anglos in Venice, who behave in exactly the same way, don't produce a similar sterotype for all whites?

Overall group organizations varied. One wrote poetry for two semesters. Another learned the sort of verbal skills normally taught on community activists'courses. These corpsmembers interviewed top faculty members at USC and discovered how a university functions. They learned the power of the spoken word to control. The international group, consisting of Mexicans, South Americans and Vietnamese of Chinese origin, all limited speakers of English, took on the responsibility of producing the CCC/Model Literacy newspaper. To do this they had to interview other corpsmembers, gather news, cajole and persuade others to write articles, stories and poems for the paper. They used English to do a job and thereby became proficient at the language.

Autobiography stimulated thought and writing and where students were unable to write directly they talked into a tape-recorder and this was then transcribed by the instructor. Dazzlingly creative raconteurs, they were able to bridge the gap between speech and writing by means of tape.

What I found impressive in all this was not so much what went on, though the scope, imagination and variety were apparently boundless, it was more how it was happening. This sort of interaction is based on trust, as Olga had said, the corpsmember daring to trust the instructor not to ridicule him, sell him short or pretend he is better than he is. The instructor was also taking risks, exposing his teaching and himself. Once this mutual trust was established then corpsmembers were anxious to sharpen their skills and break the codes. Instructors and corpsmembers were able to work harmoniously. The highest accolade for an instructor was to be called a "home-boy," that is, one of us.

For the instructors taking the risks, this was a demanding and sometimes frustrating teaching situation. They varied in their approaches from "a desire to engage on a personal level about intellectual problems" to sharing completely their experiences and becoming intimately involved in the development of each of the members of their group. Whatever the extent of the engagement, it was more intense than in almost any other teaching experience the instructors had known and a far cry from coaching young people to jump literacy hurdles. The instructors could not relax by giving the corpsmembers "busy work," that is repetitive, mechanical practice, time-filling and likely to be experienced as time-wasting. As Michael Holzman wrote in 'Creating Literacy':

> Literacy is foreign and must be naturalised. This process works best if is a powerfully engaging activity, not a routine and marginal pastime or task. The intensity of this experience is needed to break the educational inertia.

However there were organisational problems that affected the smooth running of the program. Continuity was difficult since whole crews could be missing for days at a time as they dealt with floods, fires or other natural disasters. No-one's fault, this, but irritating just the same. The intake to the CCC is continuous so corpsmembers were constantly leaving and new members joining existing groups. Consequently instructors had to establish rapport with these new corpsmembers within an already familiar group.

There were also the special difficulites of teaching adults: preparing what appeared to be interesting materials and finding they didn't gell, spending hours making materials for a student who immediately (so it seems) resigns from the corps, typing up a story by a corpsmember who is away dealing with a disaster for several days and the whole project has gone cold by the time s/he returns. In addition there is the undermining feeling that any failure or misunderstanding is the instructor's fault, and his alone, rather than a combination of factors.

When the corpsmembers began exploring USC, after months of marching into the university apparently with their eyes closed, some instructors felt they were losing control. What the corpsmembers were in effect doing was flexing their new found confidence and interest in their surroundings by finding out what was happening in other classrooms and elsewhere on campus. This was a particularly important stage of their development as confidence grew into curiosity. At the same time, as the program drew to a close, many of the corpsmembers, especially those who had been coming to USC for the whole of their time in the corps, felt alarmed at the thought of coping on their own. Those whose instructors had activated literacy by giving most of themselves were the ones who suffered the greatest withdrawal symptoms. These included both sadness and anger. Nor was it easy for the instructors to relinquish their commitment. Rather than say goodbye at the end of the spring semester they promised to meet again, if only for a coke, or pretended that making the video would in some way compensate for the loss. When the instructors met again for the last time to look at the finished video, in a non-Olympic corner of the campus in August, one of the instructors muttered, as the picture faded out, "I miss those guys."

How does this then compare with what I had left behind? Bear with me while I fill in some of the history of literacy programs in England. It all began with the Adult Literacy Campaign. The Campaign was launched in 1975 by the British Broadcasting Corporation, Local Education Authorities and voluntary organisations, who jointly co-ordinated TV programs, training for volunteer teachers and adult education workers, and classes. Its first TV series, "On the Move," was shown at peak viewing times twice a week and was intended both to teach literacy and to recruit students. A single telephone number referred potential students to their local literacy organiser and a volunteer teacher or class. This proved a highly successful way of encouraging people to come forward with about two thirds of the initial enquirers making further contact. The campaign logo became familiar nationwide. Radio programs and publications provided further support for both students and tutors and the government established the Adult Literacy Resource Agency as a central focus. The Agency's remit was to ensure that adult literacy was established as an integral part of the adult education service and to help Local Education Authorities meet the anticipated increase in demand.

Since 1975 over 250,000 adults have sought help with reading and writing. Literacy has become an integral part of adult education programs throughout Britain and classes are now financed and administered as part of the local government education service, rather than by means of central government funding. Volunteers are no longer used as they were initially since a ratio of one tutor to four students is the accepted target in classes. The Adult Literacy Resource Agency has changed its name to the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit and has been instrumental in expanding adult literacy provision in Britain. It supports and resources innovative teaching, training, research and materials and is "the central focus for adult literacy and related basic skills work in England and Wales." (ALBSU information sheet) Notice the change in terminology; literacy is being described in terms of skills. Admittedly this is a government-funded agency defining its role in an official document but the effects of this terminology are far-reaching and I want to look at them with reference to literacy classes in the city I come from, Sheffield.

Sheffield, South Yorkshire, is an industrial conurbation situated in hills and moorland one hundred and sixty miles north of London.

The current unemployment rate is 13%; many of them redundant steelworkers. Adult literacy classes here are generally taught in small groups of four to eight students, for one to two hours at a stretch up to three times a week. This is very similar to provision within the Model Literacy program. Classes take place in adult education centers and in schools, and also in more unusual locales like pubs, hospitals, local stores and Bingo halls, and on teaching buses which tour housing estates (American English: projects). As with the corpsmembers there is a continuous intake of new students, of whom some are alphabetically illiterate and some simply lack the confidence to use their existing ability. Students are taught in a number of situations: in a one-to-one teacher/student ratio while other students work on their own, group activities involving all the students or "dropping in" when they have the time and inclination and working by themselves or helping each other with a tutor on hand to guide and advise.

The tutors may describe the classes as "basic skills", or "basic education" or "literacy." The terms are used loosely and synonymously and herein lies a problem. Skills suggests a deftness at manipulating something practical, manual dexterity even, whilst education and literacy are about learning and communication. Crudely, skills are about things and literacy about people and confusing these can lead to failure in both teaching and activating literacy.

If tutors are engaged in teaching basic skills (decipherment and inscription, grammar and spelling) and students don't like it and vote with their feet, who is to say the teachers are wrong? An example of how this can happen is described in research carried out in Woolwich, London.[1] Since attendance at classes is voluntary, this alone has to suffice as an indication of how successful a teacher is. It was discovered that a greater number of students regularly attended classes run by teachers characterized as "inclusive," that is outgoing, friendly, cheerful, self-effacing, trustful and responsive. These are people whose self-esteem is high and who are likely to encourage confidence in others. The opposite kind of teacher, those whose classes were poorly attended or who had a high turnover of students, were typified as dour, hostile, aloof and self-centered, "preclusive." Whilst this sounds like a disastrous teacher of whatever subject, if the preclusive teacher thinks that all that is involved in teaching literacy is passing on sets of rules and mechanics, "skills" then s/he will feel under no pressure to change. This is the kind of cul-de-sac into which not being explicit can lead.

Given that the student/tutor ratio is so generous and the venues for classes are easily accessible and unthreatening this is a pity. Fortunately many British literacy teachers have reached similar, if inarticulated, conclusions to the director and instructors on the Model Literacy Program. They work on the premise that you begin with the individual student, his needs, interests and ability. They recognize that the adult student brings to the class a great deal of experience of reading, if only in the form of a minimal social sight vocabulary and rudimentary knowledge of some letters of the alphabet. If the class appears to be a re-run of school then it will be rejected since school is associated with failure, and the rapport established between tutors and student is not a fringe benefit but crucial to learning. Talking is not a diversion but a necessity, not only to establish trust but because of the relationship of the spoken word to reading and writing. The student's own language is the means to understand the language of others, in particular their written language.

To see how this works in practice, consider a class set up for women on a housing estate, meeting ostensibly to "improve literacy and numeracy skills." Their discussions range from post-natal depression to childhood memories to cleaning. This last generates writing about their experiences as domestic helps in other people's homes, about the horrors of cleaning children's rooms and a letter of application for a cleaning job at an old people's home. The class becomes a support group for house-wives on a low-income caring for young children, the writing has meaning for them individually and as a group. There is an immense gain in self-confidence and the women feel more able to take responsibility for their own lives. The group begins to organise their own program with the tutors supporting and resourcing.

The two most important criteria for success in teaching literacy were met in this instance: the students felt relaxed and confident with the teachers and they were writing something. Adults only read and write about what engages their attention, what is important to them or what will have serious consequences if it is left unread or unwritten. Both of these criteria were met with notable success in the Model Literacy Program. But since literacy is interpreted more narrowly and pragmatically in England, it is chancey here. Even popular "inclusive" teachers may simply be individualizing skills courses, if ever so nicely. The students continue to attend because of the teacher's genuine interest but repetitious "busy work" can eventually undermine this goodwill. "Teacher-proof" materials reduce both teacher and taught to the level of cogs in a machine and reinforce the self-image of those who are already bored and frustrated, and readers whose content is insulting and irrelevant only confirm a sense of low-worth.

An interesting example of what happens when you change from genuine communication to skills-teaching occurred with a completely illiterate Chicano corpsmember in one group of the Model Literacy Program. His instructor transcribed tapes he had made about his family and life, she read a bi-lingual children's story with him and he began to act like a reader. She then decided to experiment by giving him a first Laubach student's book to work through. His concentration became visibly poorer and while he was anxious to please his teacher the initial enthusiasm waned until they made a transcript of another tape together as the basis for a farewell article in the Friendship newspaper.

The conflict between skills and communication is most clearly seen in the way students assess how successful they have been at learning to read. After extensive research, Charnley and Jones discovered that 'students did not primarily judge their success in terms of utilitarian objectives; they registered a feeling of increased confidence, often described as a feeling of being at ease with themselves'.[2] They concluded that 'the "normal" student seemed to place cognitive achievement low in his scale of identifed experienced achievement'. However these findings have not been seen as a reason for change in terminology, nor for explicitly changing the emphasis from skills to education and communication. The latest report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the body responsible for reporting on standards in schools, colleges and adult education in

England, is likely to have the opposite effect and strengthen the case for literacy to be seen in terms of skill.[3] The report recommends a whole series of objectives for children at different ages and will doubtless become a core curriculum based solely on achieving those objectives.

The best aspects of the Model Literacy Program, the emphasis on trust and communication, are found in the most successful literacy classes in Sheffield. Literacy is not merely teaching inscription and decipherment codes, it is the basis for understanding the world and improving lives and classes that claim simply to teach skills are doing their clients a greater disservice than they realize. If, in England, we don't stop hiding behind a cloak of embarrassment, behaving as though human contact was either unmentionable or peripheral, and say what our teaching is really about the loss will be out students'. We are all homeboys of the same world.

NOTES

[1] Michael Holzman. "Creating Literacy"

[2] Ted Liddell. "The Relationship Between Tutor and Student as a Factor in Success in Adult Literacy." Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Newsletter 4 (Nov/Dec 1980)

[3] A.H. Charnley and H.A. Jones. The Concept of Success in Adult Literacy (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. 1979) p. 175

[4] English from 5 to 16: Curriculum Matters 1. An HMI Series. (HMSO 1984)

Talk, Cross-talk, and Adult Literacy

Lee Leeson's essay, "Talk, Cross-Talk, and Adult Literacy," focusses on the technique of instruction common to the Model Literacy Project and USC's Freshman Writing Program, the use of small groups as opposed to conventional classrooms, to highlight the differences in attitudes and action between the two student populations. The university students are more responsive to the instructor's expectations, the corpsmembers more decidedly (positively or negatively) engaged with the actual situation. This cultural difference is something that Lee Leeson sees as an important factor in the instructional task.

Talk, Cross-Talk, and Adult Literacy

Lee Leeson

Talk, Cross-Talk, and Adult Literacy

The primary scene of instruction in the USC-CCC Model Literacy was a small tutorial study group, generally consisting of five or six young men and women and a teacher. During 1983-84, about fifty Corpsmembers came to USC several times a week to meet in these small groups with researcher-instructors. Interestingly enough, at this same time, the Freshman Writing Program at USC was also moving increasingly from whole class to a small group discussion format. Instructors in this program were being encouraged to restructure their classes so that instead of meeting twice a week with twenty-two students, they would break the class into, perhaps, five groups that would each meet once a week for an hour.

In both settings, the Model Literacy Project and the Freshman Writing Program, the student's own reading and writing became the focus of instruction. The assumption in both settings was that it is valuable to spend class time in small groups motivating reading and writing, generating ideas, discussing problems as they arise rather than in lectures about how to read and write or in whole class textbook exercises. Writing, reading, and talk come together in these small group discussions which might be referred to as literacy events, a term used by Shirley Brice Heath and others[1] to refer to any event in which talk centers on the production or interpretation of print.

We are really only beginning to refine this kind of general definition of literacy events. And we certainly need to describe more fully exactly what constitutes such an event--that is, how do we know a literacy event when we see one, where does it start and where does it end, why is it important?

On the other hand, I think we are safe in starting with at least two assumptions. First, that as in other speech events, there are social interactional guidelines that govern such talk about print, what we are calling literacy events; and second, that these guidelines may differ among participants from different social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. In "workshop" classes this talk is the primary medium through which we negotiate interpretation of texts and offer instruction about reading and writing. If we agree that this medium is not transparent, then certainly there is pedogogical value in developing better understanding of literacy events--or this kind of talk about print.

In a pilot study during the 1983-'84 school year, I was aiming at identifying various dimensions along which features of this type of talk can be described and analyzed, specifically focusing on small group discussions of student texts, and trying to use this framework to account for instances of "cross-talk" or breakdowns of communication within these groups.[2]

Data for the pilot study were collected by observing and audio recording group discussions of writing in the two rather different settings of the USC-CCC Model Literacy Project (MLP) and in the USC Freshman Writing Program (FWP). In the groups taped in the MLP, all of the corpsmembers were black except for one male Latino. They were all young men and women recruited from economically depressed, inner city neighborhoods in Los Angeles. On the other hand, most of the students taped in FWP were white, though some black and Asian students were included. These students can be identified as predominantly middle or upper middle class. Instructors in all cases were white graduate students at USC.

My intention in this study was certainly not to simply grossly contrast these two groups of students. Individual students within each group control a very wide range of abilities and ways of speaking and variation within each group is at least as wide as any differences between them. On the other hand, there is an advantage to looking at students in two rather different settings. Dell Hymes, for example, stresses the value of contrast when we are attempting to analyze ways of speaking. He writes, "Individual accounts that individually pass without notice, as familiar possibilities, leap out, when juxtaposed as contrasts that require explanation." Hymes proposes extracting dimensions along which points of contrast between different "ways of speaking" can be located and developing descriptions of these that can then be further tested and supported.[3]

The results of the pilot study are reported from two perspectives. The first outlines four dimensions we might consider in analyzing small group discussions as literacy events. These include ways of framing the discussion, conventions governing turn taking and responding, features establishing the key of the discussion, and ways of focusing content. The second part of the report reconsiders the data in terms of "elaborated" vs. "restricted" code distinctions and suggests a way out of or around cross-talk.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION OF STUDENT WRITING AS A LITERACY EVENT

Framing the Discussion

The first dimension that we might take for granted as we combine writing, reading, and talk are the ways in which we frame such events in classrooms. Irving Goffman, drawing on Gregory Bateson, suggests that at least one element of people's frame for a particular activity is the answer to the question, "What is going on here?"[4] We know that the answer to this question might be quite different for people from different ethnic, social, or educational backgrounds even though they all seem to be involved in the "same" activity. Instructors in both the MLP and in FWP took steps that for them marked the boundaries of an activity that they labeled small group instruction or small group discussion. For example, they asked students to meet them in a particular room at a particular time. Chairs were arranged around a table or in a small circle. Students either brought written materials with them or materials were distributed to them. In every audio taped session, the instructor opened the discussion with some explanation of the purpose or procedures to be followed in that day's session.

In the course of the pilot study, many students in the Model Literacy Project, however, were observed not to enter into this "frame" initiated by the instructor or to "break out" of the frame initially established. Students were seen to seat themselves several feet away from the group table or sit turned away from the groups. During the course of the discussion, students might begin to read a magazine, start conversations with friends walking by, or occasionally quietly leave the table to look out the window--behavior that instructors reacted to either with confusion or disapproval. Several instructors in MLP declined to be audio taped on the grounds that they and their students could not maintain group discussion or would be unduly intimidated by the tape recorder. But other groups in the Literacy Project welcomed taping, treating at least some aspects of the session as a "media event" and spontaneously breaking into imitations of sports announcers, newscasters, or talk show hosts.

Students in USC Freshman Writing while sometimes limiting their participation to very brief responses to direct questions never during observation overtly broke out of the conventional frame of "group discussion." While some initially expressed mile anxiety about being taped, all thereafter pretended to ignore the tape recorder.

While many features of these group discussions in the MLP and in FWP might argue for their being considered as comparable events--both programs feature young adults students, graduate student instructors, a university setting, a focus on student writing--these features interact quite differently in each program. A more detailed "ecological" study of interaction in the Model Literacy Project is currently being conducted.[5] Here we can at least point out some of the more obvious effects of setting, activity, and role relationships. Plainly, the university setting and the activities of going to school, improving reading and writing, talking with a teacher and peers will be perceived differently by young adults enrolled as regular students and by young men and women from the surrounding inner city neighborhood. Freshman Writing students have at least tacitly agreed by their presence in the university to apprentice themselves to the norms of that community. Because their instructors have the power to evaluate them, these students are strongly motivated to figure out the frame in which the instructor is operating and to enter into it, to at least appear cooperative.

Corpsmembers, on the other hand, although they were required as part of their employment to attend literacy classes, were not "graded" on their participation. For many of the corpsmembers their previous school experiences and their current day to day contacts with employers, government agencies, businesses, and other representatives of mainstream society have been generally frustrating and demeaning. Corpsmembers, though roughly the same age as USC undergraduates, are already self-supporting adults, some with children of their own. Dressed in their work uniforms, they arrive at USC in the vans that after an hour of class will take them to a worksite where they will generally put in a full day of very strenuous physical effort. Because they work together daily, corpsmembers often know each other quite well. There is certainly some tension among ethnic groups, black, Latino, Asian. White graduate students are generally perceived as unfamiliar and advantaged. Corpsmembers are interested in, among other things, improving their reading and writing skills, learning more about the world and themselves, staying out of trouble, projecting a positive self image, coping with work and family responsibilities. The graduate students are similarly motivated. These goals may conflict with each other, and individual and group frameworks for achieving these goals can conflict. When these conflicts occur it may be difficult for individuals to initiate and to maintain interaction.

Turn-taking and Responding[6]

If a small group interaction ostensibly focused on reading and writing, a "literacy event," can be initiated, it tends, not surprisingly, to proceed rather differently in the MLP than in FWP. A second general dimension along which differences may be located relates to conventions for turn-taking and responding in these small group discussions. Observation in the Literacy Project indicated that if discussion could be initiated students then generally competed more vigorously for the floor than they did in Freshman Writing. Turns in the Literacy Project tended to be rather short with the longest turns held by those reporting personal narratives. "Back channel" responses like "MMhuh,"" that's right," "yeah," were frequent as were turns that built on each other.

Turns in the FWP, on the other hand, tended to alternate between relatively long and very short. These turns were more regularly allocated by the instructor. Observation indicated that longest turns here were usually held while an individual explained a point or position. Very short turns were accepted as responses to direct questions.

Key

These conventions governing turn-taking and responding contribute to a third dimension that we might call the key of these group discussions of writing. Thomas Kochman suggests that the group discussion style of white middle-class Americans is relatively low keyed: that is impersonal, non-challenging, with a low level of affect--when compared to the discussion style of people from many other cultural backgrounds.[7] Kochman's descriptors are, of course, relative. Compared to Athabascan speakers as in a study by Scollon and Scollon, white middle class speakers might be perceived to be the higher keyed more emotional.[8]

It does seem to be the case that again if discussion could be initiated in the Literacy Project, then it tended to be maintained in a higher key than discussions in Freshman Writing. Speakers in the Literacy Project were more likely to speak with higher volume and with more variations in tone, pitch, and stress. Greater competition for the floor resulted in more instances of overlapping speech. Turns were exchanged more rapidly. There was more joking and laughter. Speakers tended more often to assert their points rather than merely present them and they used fewer hedge words. Participants more often introduced personal experiences and told personal narratives, often in dramatic style.

While corpsmembers often used strategies of what Brown and Levinson label as positive politeness, unlike FWP students, they rarely, in the taped data used those of negative politeness.[9] This means that corpsmembers did on some occasions minimize disagreement by first agreeing with or validating another speaker's point, they tried to draw other speakers into the group, and they echoed key words and slang terms that reinforce group solidarity. On the other hand, they tended not to hedge and minimize more. This difference may mean that corpsmembers can come across as rude and abrasive, while instructors may be perceived as weak and uncertain.

Focusing the Content of Discussion

Three examples will be helpful here to illustrate several of the features discussed to this point, but especially illustrate a final dimension, how knowledge is certified or validated in each setting. The first two examples are from a Freshman Writing group discussing a paper written by Donna about problems in her school after minority students were bussed in. In Example 1, the teacher does most of the talking. In example 2, a student comments.

Example #1 -- Freshman Writing Program

Teacher: Umm I think the point about their being unhappy though
and everyone else being unhappy is well made (.) you

have to be a little aware that it - the argument does
fly in the face of what is a - a large problem though
that people living in ghettos are unhappy also

Donna: Mmm

Teacher: and you might - you know - in a sense there's an
implicit comparison there that you never make explicit -
you were happier without them being bussed and they were
unhappy there but that doesn't mean they were more
unhappy where they were (.) unless you have some
evidence to support // that

Donna: // (soft) right. I guess i was just saying that new
problems arise besides the old problems.

Example #2 -- Freshman Writing Program

Janice: I agree the personal experience adds a lot of
credibility to the issue - um (.) I think you should
have specified - um - who was being bussed in. And you
said "to us" but you didn't specify who "us" was (.) I
don't know - it just - I mean you know its usually black
and white but in some areas there Hispanics and
Orientals

Donna: (very soft) Yeh

Janice: and stuff too. I don't know about Maryland. And umm -
and uh you got your point across (.) so (.) uh

Teacher: O.K. (very soft) Dennis?

Example 1 illustrates a tendency of instructors both in FWP and in the MLP to push talk by students to greater explicitness, to press students to produce evidence to elaborate oral statements or written statements in the text under consideration. Analysis of the discourse produced by students in FWP indicates that they are often aware that being explicit is important in this context. Their comments frequently can be seen as an attempt to imitate those of the instructor.

Although everyone, including the teacher, agrees that Donna's personal experience adds "a lot" to the paper, the discussion generally proceeds in fairly formal, impersonal terms. The teacher's "O.K. Dennis" is intended to move the talk along to the next text. This move by the teacher to bring the group back to a written text is very typical of discussions both in FWP and in the Literacy Project. However, instances in which students themselves without prompting refer to the text are more frequent in Freshman Writing.

In Example 3 from the Literacy Project the teacher's shift from a discussion of a local high school to a focus on the text is met with a loud sigh and students quickly move the discussion back to a more personal basis.

Example #3 -- Model Literacy Project

Teacher: O.I. - well let's see - look in this next - the second paragraph is a real long one. Is there anything in here that (.) needs to be worked on or doesn't make any sense? // er?

?: (Audible sigh)

(.)

Teacher: I don't see anything myself (.) what about when she says, "Also the teenagers of the 80's should not be compared to those of the 60's because //

Karen: //That's right. (.) They shouldn't. Because back then they - I look at *Happy Days* and Joanie she did her homework

Deana: (laughs)

Edward: (smiles)

Teacher: (laughs)

Karen: Her mama would tell her go do her homework she did it but *now* (.) you got to lock the kid up in a room make them do th- homework=

Deana: =ah kids get away with murder now

Karen: mmuh

Teacher: But!//

Deana: //My mama says she used to get whipped and =

Karen: =My mother told me when she was coming up she didn't even know what *sex* was

Teacher: (laughs) But now would your parent have grown up in about the sixties? or//

Deana: //Yah

Teacher: //Yah?

Karen: //mmhum

Teacher: //about in the sixties

Deana: //yah

Karen: And she didn't even know what sex was (.) and my auntie she told me she didn't even know what drugs was (.0 and my sister knows what drugs are and she ain't nothin but even or six.

Here, too, evidence is introduced by the speakers to elaborate and support what has been written. The evidence is drawn from television, from personal experience, and from authority, people known to the who actually lived in the period in question. Less emphasis, though, is placed on the terms of the argument within the composition itself. It has been suggested that in Western essayist style the relationship of the text to the world of action is subordinated to the internal arguments, the internal arrangement of the text.[10] Observation in the pilot study indicates that this focus on the internal arrangement of the text is more common in FWP that a focus on the world of action is more common in the Literacy Project. Especially interesting in the taped data is the observation that this second focus in the Literacy Project is maintained not only by students but is taken up by the instructor, as, for example, in the previous discussion the teacher asks if Karen's mother actually grew up in the sixties. There are no examples in the limited taped data obtained during the pilot study of a Literacy Project instructor producing the more extended analysis of an argument that seems typical in Freshman Writing.

"ELABORATED" VS. "RESTRICTED" CODES?

Differences in Language Use

If there are differences in the way language is used in each of these two settings, is it useful to analyze these differences in terms of what, following the terminology of Basil Bernstein, might be considered "elaborated" or "restricted" codes? I would argue that in the literacy event we are labeling small group discussion of student writing there are differences in language use between the two groups of students and between teachers and students, and that these differences can usefully be related to the idea of a particular style or code, that might be considered elaborated, that is the kind of language used in schools which can be called "expository talk." This expository talk, this school talk, and the roles associated with it cause problems in both settings but especially in working with the young adults in the California Conservation Corps. I will suggest that changing roles rather than shifting styles is a way out or around cross-talk that can result from conflicting codes.

The whole notion of "restricted" and "elaborated" codes is, of course, a controversial one. And it is extremely difficult and perhaps unfair to very quickly summarize Basil Bernstein's work and the work that has led from his. However, the term "restricted code" is, I think, very generally used as Bernstein describes in _Class, Codes, and Control_ to refer to speech which is "refracted through a common cultural identity which reduces the need to verbalize intent so that it becomes explicit." Bernstein suggests that as a consequence of this social context speech is likely to be fast and fluent, sentence structure may be simplified, vocabulary will be drawn from a narrower range, meanings are likely to be concrete, descriptive or narrative rather than analytical or abstract; meaning may be condensed; individual meaning may be implicit rather than explicit.

And this contrasted with the idea of an elaborated code arising where the intent of the other person cannot be taken for granted, with the consequence that meanings will have to be expanded and raised to the level of verbal explicitness. The verbal planning here, unlike the case of a restricted code, promotes a higher level if syntactic organization and lexical selection. The preparation and delivery of relatively explicit meaning is the major function of this code. This does not mean that these meanings are necessarily abstract, but abstraction inheres in the possibilities.[12]

Bernstein relates the degree to which individual speakers control these different uses of language to differences in social class background indicating that while all speakers routinely use the restricted code those from middle class backgrounds are as a function of social roles more likely to gain control of the elaborated code and use it in appropriate situations.

In analyzing and comparing the transcripts of audio taped small group discussions of student writing in both the Model Literacy Project and in the Freshman Writing Program, some of the kinds of differences in language use that Bernstein describes are apparent. To briefly summarize them:

Corpsmembers in the taped samples from the MLP when compared to students in FWP do as Bernstein might predict: tend to speak in shorter turns, to use less elaborate sentence structure, to engage in less extended argument and to use what might generally be characterized as more conversational strategies. So, for example, as in conversation arguments tend more generally to be constructed over a series of turns rather than at length by one speaker. When narratives are introduced they tend to be picked up by other speakers, who then add their own narratives on the same theme.

As previously indicated, FWP students, tend in general to hedge their statements more often with models such as "might," "could," and to introduce them with verbs of thinking and saying such as "I know," "I mean," "I think." Corpsmembers in the transcripts use more action verbs. The effect of this, is that although the statements of FWP students certainly are not necessarily more abstract or thoughtful, they are more often couched in terms of thinking and ideas and of hypothetical possibilities.

Finally, speakers in both settings resort to stock arguments but in FWP there seems a greater tendency to try to tease out the implications of these arguments. A review of the transcripts suggests it may be the case that instructors in the Model Literacy Project simply have difficulty recognizing the points being made or following their construction over several turns and certainly have difficulty asking the relevant questions that might provide the scaffolding in which the speaker could examine his or her own conclusions.

School Talk/School Roles

In outlining these differences, I do not mean to say that in USC Freshman Writing small group tutorials are universally characterized by "elaborated" talk that is subtle, analytical, highly explicit and at a high level of syntactic organization and lexical selection, or that in the CCC Model Literacy Project what passes for group discussion is little more than a teacher led rap session. What is found in both settings is often a teacher pushing toward and modeling the kind of talk that from Bernstein is sometimes called "elaborated" but which I think is more accurate in school settings to call "expository" talk. This is talk essentially controlled by the teacher, in which the student speaker is expected not just to communicate ideas but also to display knowledge in appropriate ways. This talk is, I believe, especially important to writing instructors because it moves toward a literate model and reinforces the style, content, the persona students are often expected to adopt in their essays.

In both settings, it is apparent that instructors have some difficulties in engaging students in this "expository" talk and in maintaining the discussion, especially in keeping the discussion from turning into either a monolog by the teacher or into a high energy conversation, that while enjoyable tends to drift away from the reading or student writing supposedly under discussion. However, these difficulties were more severe in the Model Literacy Project, and it was more likely in this setting that the instructor would abandon discussion altogether for other kinds of activities.

Ostensibly, one of the most important goals of workshop approaches to writing, of small group tutorials or peer group discussions is to minimize the distance and authority of the teacher, to dramatize for students their own roles as readers and writers. Certainly, we had these goals in mind when we began the Model Literacy Project. But, perhaps not surprisingly, we discovered in the Literacy Project that getting young adults to take on these roles of readers and writers in a school-like setting or at least getting them to pretend to take on these roles is easier when the drama is played out between mainstream students and instructors, as in Freshman Writing, than it is when the writing workshop is conducted by traditional instructors with non-traditional students as in the Model Literacy Project.

Although the problem may seem obvious, it's useful to think in terms of language use why this si so. In the first place, the fact that FWP students have made it to the university indicates that they are generally "better" at the whole business of school and school talk. And in coming to the university they have at least tacitly agreed to continue to mold themselves to the academic model. As college freshmen they are generally willing to play the game if they have to, to enter into "contrived situations" if necessary in which students write and talk about writing mostly in order to earn a grade for now and as a trial run for "real writing" sometime in the future.

Beyond this, in the best writing classes, mainstream college students may be able right now to enter into the writing workshop frame that tells them that they have real things of interest to say to their teacher and their peers that can be said more effectively, in a more organized and forceful, certainly in a more permanent, way in writing. Again, this taking on of the writer's role in a school situation is likely to be easier for mainstream students. Research on child language acquisition indicates that middle class children are in many ways encouraged to play the role of being powerful, being authoritative within a supportive framework provided by parents and teachers. Most importantly, they learn the appropriate verbal strategies for displaying power and authoritative knowledge in mainstream society and are rewarded for doing so. Other researchers, notable Labov, Heath, Scollon & Scollon, Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, demonstrate that this is often not true for children outside the mainstream. While they too learn successful strategies at home, these often do not fit in with those accepted as appropriate by school. School for these children does not encourage them to feel more confident or competent; instead, the school reinforces their position of powerlessness within mainstream society.

What purpose can there be then for these children grown up to once again apprentice themselves in the role of expository talkers and writers? The situation of the tutorial group, of the workshop group is often "contrived" in that there is no purpose or audience for the writing or reading task outside the group itself. If all of my audience is present to me fact to face, why must I contextualize my entire argument, or my narrative within my written text? Why not assume common knowledge, the stock arguments I know my audience shares with me? Why abandon conversational strategies that are so successful?

Taking On Writer/Reader Roles

It seems to me that no simple rearrangement of classroom format into small groups, no merely verbal strategy can return authority for their own learning to these young adults. And yet, taking especially Friere as a reference,[14] in order to be literate I think that it is fair to say that individuals must see themselves as capable of creating knowledge and culture, they must see themselves as active writers and readers. One solution aimed at drawing adults into the roles of writers and readers has been to try to contrive more interesting methods -- better materials, imaginative assignments, activities that are fun. A better solution, I think, is to shift the whole basis on which literacy groups meet in order to break out of classroom interactions in which we talk expository talk in order to learn how to talk expository talk, or where we chat about our experiences and problems and all feel better but nothing else changes. The way out of cross-talk is not to change the way we talk or what we talk about in contrived school like interactions but to redefine our purposes and roles in working together.

The challenge in the Model Literacy Project, then, became to discover with corpsmembers tasks that they could take on with our assistance and with that of the group in which they would not simply practice the roles of writers, readers, critical thinkers, but actually take them on. In retrospect, most of these tasks seem quite obvious. They included writing and publishing a Center newspaper; taping and transcribing interviews on topics of interest; dealing with print in the environment - including things like job applications, food stamp forms, movie ads, health insurance materials, and workplace reports; producing poems and plays; selecting or discussing pleasure reading. Trying to accomplish these tasks changes the relationship between the instructor and student, minimizing "cross-talk" by eliminating unmotivated expository talk, school talk for its own sake. In these tasks the middle class teacher cannot serve simply as a model whom students are expected to imitate. As a facilitator, the teacher must learn about the life of the community and must rely on the corpsmembers as sources of information. The language that is needed emerges within the context of reading and writing tasks. For example, with a teacher's help corpsmembers preparing a pamphlet for Olympic visitors decide for themselves how explicit they will need to be in order to make their points clear. They adopt a style they feel is needed in this particular context. In another example, Yves, though he can barely read and write conducts taped interviews on life in the Corps, in an entirely appropriate, fairly formal style familiar to him from television, generating himself the questions that push his interviewees to be more detailed, more explicit, to step back from their experience and consider its implications.

To sum up, differences in language use certainly can be identified in classroom contexts. These differences are significant for teachers and students. They lead too many elementary and secondary teachers to conclude that minority students can not carry on a discussion, do not know how to be specific, can not develop a logical argument, lack imagination. It will be helpful for teachers and researchers to continue to examine the settings, especially, given the central role of reading and writing in contemporary education, the literacy events in which children are expected to display these abilities. Students from outside the mainstream may find it difficult or see no point in displaying any of these abilities in the "class discussion," "expository talk" style generally considered appropriate in school. In adult literacy classes it will be difficult for the mainstream teacher to act as a facilitator if, in fact, lessons continue to focus on contrived talk about contrived reading and writing tasks. The way out, it seems, is for teacher and students to explore together the roles they can play as speakers, writers, and readers in their jobs, families, and communities and develop together what being logical or specific or imaginative might mean in those contexts.

NOTES

[1] Shirley Brice Heath, Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work, in Communities and Classrooms, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also, Anderson, Alonzo and Griffen, Peg, "Environment of Reading: Mediating the World Through the Word," Annual Meeting, International Reading Association, May, 1983.

[2] For discussions of "cross-talk" see John Gumperz, ed., Language and Social Identity, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[3] Dell Hymes, Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), pg. 33-41.

[4] On the ecology of research settings see M. Cole, L. Hood, and R. McDermott, Ecological Niche Picking: Ecological Invalidity As an Axiom of Experimental Cognitive Psychology, The Rockefeller University, Laboratory of Comparitive Human Cognition and Institute for Comparitive Human Development, n.d.; also, Urie Bronfenbrenner, The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[5] Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pg. 21-39.

[6] There is, of course, an extensive literature analyzing the structure both of conversation and of classroom interaction. See, for example, M. Coulthard, An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, (Harlow, Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1977); S. Levinson, Pragmatics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); J. Sinclair and M. Coulthard, Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); H. Mehan, Learning Lessons: Social Organization in the Classroom, (Cambridge, MA:

Harvard University Press, 1979); J. Richards, *Classroom Language: What Sort?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978).

[7] Thomas Kochman, *Black and White Styles in Conflict,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[8] R. Scollon and S. Scollon, *Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication,* (Norwood, NJ: Albex, 1981).

[9] P. Brown and S. Levinson, "Universals in Language Use: Politeness Phenomena," in *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction,* ed. E. Goody, (Cambridge University Press, 1979) pg. 56-311.

[10] See, for example, George Dillon, *Constructing Texts,* (Bloomington, IN: INdiana University Press, 1981), pg. 21-49. Dillon draws on David Olson, "The Literate Bias of Schooling," in *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge,* ed. R. Anderson, R. Spiro, and W. Montague, (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977), and reflects the wider ranging debate concerning oral vs. literate styles of language use and thought. Some of the key issues in this debate are summarized in S. Scribner and M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pg. 3-15.

[11] For example, Scribner and Cole, pg 242-244, use the term "expository talk." See also, Dillon, pg. 43-45

[12] Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes, and Control, Volume 1: Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language,* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pg. 127-129.

[13] W. Labov, "The Logic of Nonstandard English," in *Language and Social Context,* ed. P. Giglioli (New York: Penguin Books, 1972); J. Gumperz and J. Cook-Gumperz, "From Oral to Written Culture: The Transition to

Literacy," in *Variation in Writing*, ed. M. F. Whiteman, (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1981). Again, there is an extensive literature on language and disadvantage. See, for additional examples, G. Wells, "Variation in Child Language," in *Language Acquisition: Studies in First Language Development*, ed. P. Fletcher and M. Garman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pg. 377-395; J.R. Edwards, *Language and Disadvantage*, (New York: Elsevier, 1979); L. Feagans and D. Clark, eds., *The Language of Children Reared in Poverty*, (New York: Academic Press, 1982).

[14] Paulo Friere, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1982).

A Critical Review of U.S. Literacy Campaigns

Frank Gaik's essay, which follows, summarizes his research concerning the main U.S. adult literacy projects. In general he finds that they are based either on volunteerism or night school models of adult education. The former, although attractive, suffers from two main problems. Quantitatively, there are simply too many people in need of literacy education. Qualitatively, there are a number of issues involving class, race, and ethnicity that make it unlikely that the spirit of volunteerism will prove strong enough for the task at hand. Gaik finds that the adult education model offers little but a repetition of the techniques used in the public schools which produced illiterate adults in the first place. Gaik's research was a primary motive in our development of the concept of environmental literacy as an alternative methodology for the C.C.C., one which would take no army of literacy workers, nor would replicate negative experiences of formal schooling.

A Critical Review of U.S. Literacy Campaigns:

The Search for a Model

Frank Gaik

A Critical Review of U.S. Literacy Campaigns:

The Search for a Model

The number of adults who are functionally illiterate in the United States is staggering. The Department of Education estimates that around 23 million Americans fall into this category, and that another 46 million cannot perform basic literacy tasks required for full participation as citizens and consumers. These figures do not include the many Americans whose literacy is "functional" but who would see the use of literacy for personal and academic growth as an alien activity.

Although the primary task of promoting literacy has been assigned to the school system, several adult literacy programs do exist beyond the school walls. Unfortunately, these programs have failed their "mission," a mission often unhappily described as "eradicating the disease" or "stamping out the blight" of illiteracy. Slogons like these usually inspire only short-term campaigns such as "Right to Read," which was announced by President Nixon in 1970 as "the beginning of the end of adult literacy in the United States." But illiterate Americans are still with us, and the Department of Education estimates that every year an additional 2 million functional illiterates are added to the adult population. Some of these are recent immigrants; others are High School dropouts and graduates. This is around the same number of persons served by present adult literacy programs.

In the fall of 1983, I was involved in one of these programs, the Model Literacy Project sponsored by the University of Southern California. We tutored young adults from the Los Angeles Urban Center of the California Conservation Corps. Around the same time, the National Literacy Initiative, sponsored by the Department of Education, was announced with fanfare by President Reagan. "If we're to renew our economy and protect our freedom," he said, "we must sharpen the skills of every American mind and enlarge the potential of every individual American life. Unfortunately, the hidden problem of adult illiteracy holds back too many of our citizens, and as a nation, we, too, pay a price." The National Literacy Initiative established a network whereby various literacy programs across the country could share information. My job in the USC Model Literacy Project was to search this literature for an existing model to inform our efforts. There was general agreement among us that although we had been teaching composition for some years, we remained generally ignorant about literacy programs per se.

The two most influential literacy programs in the United States are the privately-funded Laubach Literacy made up exclusively of volunteers, and the publicly-funded Adult Basic Education Program, which funds a variety of night courses. When materials and strategies from these programs were shared with the corpsmembers, there was a marked discrepancy between what the corpsmembers found interesting and what these programs assumed would be interesting. In general, the materials were useful only when teachers rerouted the assignments and subverted the instructions for their use. Yet the problem seemed not to be with the materials so much as with the assumptions behind these materials, assumptions about HOW and most importantly WHY people learn to read and write and why they continue doing so. In short, the Laubach and ABE models seemed designed for different people than those we were meeting from the California Conservation Corps.

That discrepancy led me to what follows: a critical examination of U.S. literacy programs. The background for this critique comes from three sources: the experience with the California Conservation Corps, the findings of several literacy and learning theorists, and, most inportantly, an analysis of the papers presented at the National Adult Literacy Conference (NALC), held in Washington, D.C. in January 1984.[1] The NALC, bringing together project directors and literacy scholars from across the country, provides a substantial overview of the current state of adult literacy education. In the following pages, then, I shall examine current literacy efforts; my goal will be to search for a model that could serve a genuine national literacy effort. The discussion will be in three sections: 1) Traditional approaches, 2) Alternative approaches, and 3) Workplace Approaches.[2] Before we begin, I would like to emphasize that this critique is structural and ideological: it is not aimed at the many committed people who bring these programs the successes they have. It is rather to suggest why these successes are not more widespread.

1. Traditional Approaches

The two most significant projects in the U.S., those that receive the most participants, publicity, and funding, are Laubach Literacy and the Adult Education Program (or ABE). Since any major national efforts are likely to follow their models, we will consider their strengths and weaknesses in some detail.

Laubach Literacy

The Laubach Literacy program is made up of 30,000 volunteers who tutor about 50,000 adults in the United States each year. Laubach not only recruits and trains volunteers but also publishes basal readers for other volunteer programs like the National Affiliation for Literacy Advance (NALA) and for Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). (Their materials are also used by several ABE-sponsored programs.) The Laubach approach, founded on the tradition of Christian service, places a great responsibility on the learner to acquire skills and then share those skills with others. Their motto is "Each one teach one." Frank Laubach, founder explains that "The primary condition is that the volunteer be motivated, have some empathy for the person with whom he is working. He doesn't teach--he becomes a friend" (Laubach, 1970, p. 277). Laubach's plan for a national literacy effort was stated in 1970 as follows:

> We could use television and radio, and newspapers and magazines, to reach people and say, in this hour when the government and all of the rest of us want to liquidate illiteracy and the poverty that goes alon with it: "This is the thing you can do. Each of you can take one illiterate. You can say to him, "I will be glad to tutor you any hour that's convenient for you and myself, anywhere, and I'll be your friend. It'll help you and see if you can't get a better job because what we need now is people to earn more and make better use of their money." That's what it's all about. Not only teach them to read, but also help them to help themselves up. This is better than handing foo out to people. The food and clothing soon perish. But you hand them your know-how and you still have it--to give to someone else--that's the beauty of it. Each one teach one (Laubach, 1970, p. 279).

While the Laubach approach deserves praise for stressing the humane relations between teacher and learner, my experience suggests that it woul present several difficulties as a model for national effort. These problems are logistical, cultural, and pedagogical.

The logistical problems interfere with the relationship that Laubach recommends between teacher and student. For instance, part of Laubach's goal has already been reached by the National Literacy Initiative's advertising campaign; it provides a toll-free number where you can find th address of literacy projects in your area. However, the list of programs for persons who live in inner city Los Angeles offers several obstacles. To join a program you must travel several miles outside of your neighborhood (in some cases "territory") and/or visit an unfamiliar church In addition, there are the practical obstacles of their finding transportation and child care.[3] Indeed, as Frank Smith might say, anyone with this much ambition to read or write has probably learned already.[4]

Another problem with the Laubach method has to do with the cultural and value conflicts that inevitably come into play. If you share the Laubach belief that "literacy can indeed eradicate poverty" you are probably already literate. On the other hand, if you do not, you must be converted before the Laubach program can begin. One might call this approach the "missionary position" on literacy--if only to emphasize that other options exist.

The Laubach method also has some pedagogical difficulties. Laubach primers are based on the phonics approach that Frank Laubach developed 50 years ago in the Philippines. Not only has the phonics method been seriously questioned by reading theorists but it is especially problematic for use with adult readers, whose knowledge, experience, and culture are ignored during the lessons. As Paulo Freire points out in a delightful passage:

> In most reading programs, the students must endure an abysm between their own experience and the contents offered for them to learn. It requires patience indeed, after the hardships of a day's work (or of a day without work), to tolerate lessons dealing with "wing." "Johnny say the wing." "The wing is on the bird." Lessons talking of Graces and grapes to men who never knew a Grace and never ate a grape. "Grace saw the grape" (Freire, 1980, 43).

Indeed, such basal-reading approaches may ultimately alienate the very people the Laubach volunteers are dedicated to helping.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the Laubach program is its ideology of volunteerism. (And I say this knowing very well that this ideology does not necessarily interfere with the successes that most volunteers have had.) My concern is that assigning the job of literacy training to volunteers paradoxically trivializes the enterprise ("all that you need is sympathy") and, simultaneously, places an inordinate amount of responsibility on volunteers to handle what some now call a "national crisis." How important is the crisis if we assign it to volunteers? Even more disturbing is the fact that the volunteer model has become the basis for the National Literacy Initiative's advertising drive, as designed by the Advertising Council, the same folks who brought us Smokey the Bear, Woodsy Owl, and Officer McGruff. Promotion by the Ad Council nearly guarantees that ILLITERACY will be seen as one of several social problems--like forest fires, pollution, or crime--that should be solved not by federal and state funding but by each of us doing our own part. A typical Ad Council slogan like "People start pollution, people can stop it" reduces the notion of the polluter to the occasional fisherman who throws a beer can out the car window. But few of us throw radioactive waste out of our windows, and that, too, is a form of pollution for which we must be ultimately responsible. Laubach's appeal to each of us to "take one illiterate," then, (as well as President Reagan's statements pointing out how "every illiterate person hurts") reduces non-reading adults to errors, mistakes, or anomalies of the system, somewhat like trash along the highway that must be disposed of.

Adult Basic Education

If the Laubach program can be loosely described as the "litter bag" approach to literacy, we might consider Adult Basic Education classes as the recycling model. Students are seen as vessels who must be returned to the classroom for a refill. ABE was inaugurated by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and is designed for adults 16 years and older who are out of school and have not completed high school, roughly around 70 million Americans.[5] The stated goal of ABE is education for Adults "whose inability to read or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment" (Harman & Hunter 1978, 66). Despite this goal, however, ABE courses are rarely connected to workplace training programs.[6] Hence, as with Laubach Literacy, there remains the logistical problem of getting adults to evening classes. This difficulty may partially explain the fact that the "target population" for ABE is around 70 million, but the "demand population," those who enroll, comprise about 2 million. A study by Kreitlow and others found that this disparity should not be blamed on the ABE curriculum but on the "poverty of life circumstances" of those who have "perhaps the greatest need for basic education" (Kreitlow, et. al. 1981, 68). In light of these findings, there has been an increased awareness that ABE cannot ignore the economic and psychological needs of its students, and, according to the *Adult Education Statistics, 1981,* several ABE programs have been supplemented by volunteer organizations (primarily church groups) that provide transportation, childcare, and sometimes counseling. However, since these services are not part of the official budget of ABE, it remains practically impossible in most cases for adult students to attend night classes, as Freire says, "after the hardship of a day's work (or of a day without work)." Among ABE students in 1981, for instance, 37.1 percent of participants were employed while 46.5 percent were unemployed, and 15 percent were on public assistance.

The most trenchant critique of ABE was written by Mezirow, et.al. (1975) in their study **A Last Gamble on Education.** They found that most students who remain in ABE classes are the school-oriented, usually middle-class persons who are probably learning by themselves anyway. Their fundings are supported by several statistics from ABE First of all, while nearly 50% of the ABE participants in 1981 reported being unemployed, when they were asked their reasons for enrolling, only 8 percent mentioned job-related reasons. These statistics suggest that the unemployed students were probably not "heads of households" actively seeking work. They may also suggest that persons who are seriously seeking jobs do not go to ABE to improve their employability. On the other hand, of the same group, over 80% stated that the classes did improve their "self-concept." We might assume, then, that those who found their self-concept improved without the need for practical benefits are probably those "school-oriented" persons described by Mezirow, persons who find particular delight in studying basic skills in a classroom. On the other hand, these statistics also suggest that literacy improvement can have general benefits without being necessarily tied to work-place programs, a idea we will examine later. These people are important, certainly, and they deserve opportunities for knowledge and credentials, but in most cases they are not the students that ABE is designed to help.

Students who are not "school-oriented," however, do not fare well in ABE classes. Although most persons between the ages of 16-21 take ABE classes to earn their GED degree or high school equivalency, in 1981 only a relatively small percentage of ABE participants earned their GED degree (8.9%) or diploma (2.4%).[7] This relatively low success rate can be primarily explained, I suggest, by the fact that most ABE classes replicate the high school environment that alienated many of these students originally. Over one-half of ABE classes meet in elementary and secondary schools. And what is described as the "individualized instruction" that is practiced in over half of ABE classrooms often means that students work through commercially-produced workbooks at their own pace. This practice alone may explain the program's 50% drop-out rate: anyone willing to work on their own would probably rather do so at home. Even ABE admits in its 1981 report that "Research evidence suggests that teachers foster greater learning opportunities for adults when instructional strategies, methods, and techniques are suited specifically to adult populations rather than to children. However, most adult education teachers were trained and certified to teach children" (Decker, 1984, 19). All of these factors combine to lend considerable weight to Mezirow's findings: those who do well in school also do well in ABE; those who don't drop out.

What about improving ABE? We might speculate on the consequences of ABE's becoming a well-funded and well-staffed program that offers a refreshing change from the environment and pedagogy of the public schoolroom. But we must also consider that in certain inner-city schools drop-out rates are around 25% and that on any given day nearly one-third of the students are absent. Compounded with the fact that many of these drop-outs are already counselled to finish their education through ABE, we can imagine that an improved ABE program might effect a mass exodus from the public schools.

However, the vision of a utopian ABE program should not trouble us. Current federal funding for ABE is around 90 million dollars, down from its peak of 100 million a few years ago. Thus our federal investment in the 70 million citizens for whom ABE is designed is a little over one dollar per year.

Traditional Literacy Programs: Summary and Critique

It may be useful here to summarize the basic problems with the Laubach and ABE approaches. Besides the logistical, cultural, and pedagogical difficulties that have been mentioned, there remain several limiting assumptions about how people learn to read and write. First, both programs, in structure if not in practice, falter in that

> **They expect adults to learn literacy skills in isolation from socio-economic concerns.**

They follow what Harste, et. al. (1984) might call the **cognitive fallacy,** "The assumption that cognitive ability is a 'state' which transcends and affects any particular instance of thinking" (102). Such a fallacy leads one to assume that the cognitive state can be identified, separated from the life of the learner, and manipulated. In short, it is the unreasonable faith in transferrable skills. While adult learners are complex beings often burdened by practical matters, workbook approaches to learning demand a kind of Husserlian reductionism. One must bracket "real-life" concerns so that literacy sub-skills can be attended to. But since this ability is primarily school-induced in the first place, it may be more difficult to learn a few evenings a week than literacy itself. Furthermore, we should recall that we teachers rarely demand the same bracketing from ourselves. When we teach, our literacy skills are intimately linked to our economic and ethical concerns. Likewise when we write. Adult learners deserve the same experience.

The second limitation of traditional approaches is that

> **They expect adults to learn literacy skills in isolation from meaning concerns.**

This is what I call the "Protestant Literacy Ethnic." It divides learning into a series of steps and demands that meaning or purpose be postponed while one accumulates relatively meaningless subskills (indeed some basal programs boast that they contain no "content" at all). This is the kind of pedagogy, one would say with Alfred North Whitehead, which treats the mind like a "dead instrument" that must be sharpened before used. But "The mind is never passive," says Whitehead. "You cannot postpone its life until you have sharpened it" (1929, 6). In short, both Laubach and ABE programs require a "school-mentality" that most adults have already been unwilling to adopt.

II. Alternative Literacy Programs

Several alternatives to traditional literacy programs were presented at The National Adult Literacy Conference. They can be loosely called "competency-based" approaches, since they connect literary training to the needs of either 1) community involvement or 2) employment.

Community Literacy

In contrast to the Laubach "one-on-one" approach or the ABE "classroom" approach, Nina Wallenstein presented a model of "community literacy" in her NALC paper "Literacy and Minority Language Groups: Community Literacy as Method and Goal." Community literacy, says Wallenstein "involves the community as a place for learning and a place to return to, for teaching." In Wallenstein's model, which owes much to Paulo Freire, learners do not bracket "real-world" concerns. Instead, these concerns make up the subject of study. Furthermore, Wallenstein stresses writing so that learners can produce their own literacy, using it to criticize and change their environment, rather than merely to survive in it.[8] But literacy alone, even critical literacy, is insufficient to solve the social problems faced by most illiterates. Literacy programs must therefore go "beyond the classroom" and connect themselves to the existing institutions with which people must engage.[9] And like Laubach, Wallenstein thinks that students should be teachers, but teachers of more than literacy; they must use their knowledge for community action. The goal, then, is not community readers but community leaders: Each one, teach many.

Wallenstein's comprehensive program is a demanding order to fill. Obviously it would draw criticism. One example of such criticism comes from Jeanne S. Chall in her NALC paper "New Views on Developing Basic Skills with Adults:

> The appeal of Freire's theory has been strong. But sometimes it is overlooked that his adult learners had little or no previous schooling while the typical adult basic literacy student in the United States today had been to school for a number of years and is considerably more sophisticated. There is also a tendency to overlook that fact that Paulo Freire's reading program for beginners was developed with great care to teach them how to read. Only the most vital words are to be taught at the beginning and these are selected also to teach a maximum number of sound-to-letter relations. Thus, word recognition and decoding are a vital aspect of the Freire program, along with motivation and political consciousness. This is in contrast to many of our reading programs for adult beginners which assume that interesting and vital content will lead naturally to word recognition.

Chall makes two points that deserve comment. The first is that most American "basic readers," in contrast to Brazilian peasants, have already been exposed to years of school and mass culture. Yet this fact, undoubtedly true, raises the question of why, with such advantages, American non-readers would still consider literacy an alien and alienating activity. With such a literate culture surrounding them, what has gone wrong? The answer may come from Nina Wallenstein's theory of "hidden voices." "Hidden voices" are the memories, anxieties, and practical concerns that block learning unless they become the subject of that learning.[10] What are the "hidden-voices" of American non-readers? Whatever they are, they are probably part of the cultural advantages that Chall mentions, years of schooling and exposure to mass culture.[11]

Chall's second point, the importance of "sound-to-letter correspondences" reveals her dedication to developmental approaches. "In essence," she says, "the main goal of adult literacy programs is to bring adults up from lower literacy levels to higher ones." Unfortunately, Chall assumes that these "levels" can be determined by examining texts alone. When examining some hypothetical paragraphs, she discovers that "The easiest passages, those at lower stages, use words that are generally familiar, common, concrete and short. The passages at higher levels have more words that are unfamiliar, difficult, technical, abstract, and long .

it becomes more abstract at the later stages, requiring more analytic and critical thought."[12] These observations are true in theory, but Chall's analysis denies what Wallenstein and others have shown in practice--that "familiar" words and words deserving "analytic and critical thought" need not be separated. There are plenty of words that serve both roles. "Love" for instance.[13] Or __favela__, the Portugese word for "slum"--on which Freire based a reading lesson. Finally, the Challian "Reading States" method makes a dangerously ethnocentric assumption, which is that a word "familiar" to me is also one familiar to you. On the one hand, any word immediately "familiar" to both of us is probably a word that has little personal significance for either of us, likewise a sentence or lesson built from such words. On the other hand, a word might be familiar and significant to both of us if we shared the same values or community. In such case, of course, the advantages of Wallenstein's "community literacy" become even more apparent. A literacy lesson should not be a meaningless barrier but a meaningful bridge between teacher and student.

III. Workplace Literacy

While Wallenstein's approach aims for "competence" in one's community, there are several programs whose aim is to establish "competency" in the workplace. Workplace literacy programs are usually found in two forms. In the first, literacy skills are subsumed under "job training" programs, and literacy is seen as an integral part of adapting to the work task. The best example of this type of program comes from the military, whose task-oriented literacy training will be discussed in detail later. The second form of workplace literacy training--and the most prevalent--subsumes "job training skills" under literacy skills, and can perhaps be best explained by an anecdote. Typically, when a new technology arrives in the workplace, the first state of "retraining" involves literacy. Usually the worker is sent home to study the manual. When this tactic fails, as it often does, the failure becomes a "literacy problem," the assumption being that either the manual is too literate or the worker not enough so. At this point several options exist. In some cases, manuals can be rewritten to a lower reading level.[14] Or the worker can be instructed to a higher reading level, and basic reading classes may be required after work. In other cases the worker will be allowed to learn the skill by observation or trial and error.[15] More likely, however, the company decides to rehire rather than retrain. And another lost job is blamed on insufficient literacy skills. This pattern of decision making reveals a mistaken notion about literacy, failing in particular to distinguish between "reading-to-do" and "reading-to-learn," to use Thomas Sticht's terms.[16] Actually, the barrier between the worker and the new task is probably not reading skills at all. Typically, the worker lacks knowledge about the task, which comes with familiarity. As anyone can attest who has tried to repair a car, construct a Christmas toy, or understand an insurance policy, literacy skills alone are often insufficient.

Thomas Duffy, in his NALC paper, "Literacy Instruction in the Military," recounts how the military changed its literacy instruction from "skill-oriented" to "task-oriented," a change accompanied by the discovery that:

> Indexing reading requirements is not simply a matter of applying a readability formula. In fact, a difficulty index of material is not possible without considering the reader and the subject matter knowledge he or she possesses as well as the particular reading task. What is required is an identification of the categories of reading

> tasks, the text structures on which those tasks are performed, and the content domain of the text. . . . Comprehension will [also] depend on the individual's understanding of the subject matter being presented. Literacy instruction, then, must take into account those knowledge requirements.

Before 1977[17] the military offered entry-level literacy classes in preparation for job demands, somewhat based on the ABE model. But skills were not transferring: many military tasks have their own "sub-languages" that create unique literacy demands. Then policy changed, and "the actual reading tasks personnel had to perform became the focus in designing and defining the curriculum and the standards." Along with this transformation came the useful distinction between "reading-to-do" and "reading-to-learn" and the ways that each skill should be taught. Duffy explains:

> The reading-to-do phase includes separate modules on using tables of contents, indexes, tables and graphs, forms, procedural information, and expository texts . . . The reading-to-learn phase focuses on strategies for building knowledge structures in the particular content domains the student would encounter.

The "reading-to-do" phase makes one familiar with textual conventions. The "reading-to-learn" phase builds knowledge by any media necessary, since . "oral, written, and graphic languages represent the same knowledge base."

The change in the military literacy programs allows us a few generalizations about functional literacy in general. It appears that there are not "functionally literate persons" and "functionally illiterate persons," per se. Each of us becomes literate through familarity with particular reading demands. Such a generalization is supported by Scribner and Cole (1978) whose study found that, in general, the cognitive demands of literacy are highly specific and closely tied to particular tasks and scripts. Moreover, even when one script is involved, Goody, Scribner and Cole (1977) found that the key is not cognitive skills necessarily but rather familiarity, the extended practice of these skills.

The military findings are also supported by Lev Vygotsky's theory that cognitive skills are closely tied to the kinds of tools used by those skills. Vygotsky argues that even higher psychic processes are transformed by exposure to different psychological tools such as counting, algebra, diagrams, maps, schemas, tables--all of which the military would identify as different "text structures." While Vygotsky's theory is drawn from Marx's belief that tools shape our consciousness because they mediate our engagements with our environment, there is also evidence from archeology on this point. For example, "The elaboration of the tool-making capacity of the australopithicene required an expansion of the frontal area of the cerebral cortex, and the hominid brain consequently grew from 500 cc. 1,500.000 years ago to 1100 cc. 350,000 years ago and eventually to the modern 1400 cc. (Robert J. Maxwell in Yaker et. al. 1971, p. 39.). Finally, more mundane evidence suggests that most skills required by jobs in post-industrial societies are learned on the job rather than through formal education (Collins, 1980). All of this research supports the military literacy model as a useful model for particular workplace literacy practices.[18]

Literacy Training in Business

Of course, the military model is not easily translated to private industry which lacks the military's comprehensive motivating forces. Nevertheless, there has been an increased awareness among businesses of how costly functionally illiterate workers have become. A New York Insurance Company reports, for example, that 70 percent of its correspondence must be retyped because secretaries working from recorders cannot spell and punctuate correctly (Mikulecky, 1982, 79). And the problem is not only with very labor-intensive bureaucratic industries.

In light of recent literacy problems in the workplace, three developments have occurred. First, several companies have instituted literacy training as a prelude to hiring.[19] Second, companies have instituted literacy tutoring for employees after work or rewarded workers who take part in evening classes.[20] Finally, there has been an increased outcry by businesses that schools should better prepare students for the particular demands of work-place literacy.

Problems with Business Approaches

The primary restriction to successful workplace literacy programs, is, of course, that businesses are not committed to literacy but to higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and so on, and adult literacy training must be justified in these terms. There is also an underlying ideology in business about literacy, an ideology perhaps best expressed by Dr. Peter Drucker, who has stated that "No one needs to read and write if he wants t stay on the assembly line all of his life. But if you want to go farther than that, writing skills become essential."[21] Drucker's viewpoint implie that literacy is needed only by white collar workers. Yet when Diehl and Mikulecky (1980) surveyed 107 people in 100 different occupations, they found that the average worker reads and refers to a 1-3 page text daily fo about an hour a day. Nevertheless, Drucker's ideology seems to dominate most industrial literacy practices. In general, blue-collar workers are required to attend classes where they learn lower-level skills, such as reading instructions and filling out forms. Pink-collar workers (secretaries) are rewarded for taking courses in grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. And white-collar workers are offered a variety of optional classes, or seminars, usually taught by consultants, which emphasize brainstorming techniques, memo and report writing, and critical thinking.

Other practical problems with business-based literacy programs are brought out by Mary L. Tenopyr of American Telephone and Telegraph Company in her NALC essay "Realities of Adult Literacy in Work Settings." Tenopyr emphasizes that businesses cannot be expected to institute literacy programs on a mass scale. If a worker is not literate enough to complete a job task, a business has several options: it may re-adjust or re-assign job tasks, automate, raise recruiting standards, rehire, or retrain. The last priority, retraining, is especially rare during periods of high unemployment. In addition, retraining programs must meet rigid cost-effective standards; the ATT policy, for instance, states that:

> Programs should be cost-efficient, with clearly defined objectives and evaluation, measurable in a systematic fashion with control groups, consistent with over-all company objectives, and tied to practical business outcomes.

Despite these practical difficulties, Tenopyr did mention several bright possibilities to increase workplace literacy programs. The first is that businesses, in general, need more information about the relationship between literacy and job performance. For most companies, literacy itself is a vague concept, implying all the basic knowledge learned in formal schooling. Yet many companies are willing to change policies if research warrants it. For example, ATT has discovered that some "ability tests" are not indicative of an employee's work performance. It was once thought by ATT recruiters that operators needed good spelling skills until research showed otherwise. Tenopyr calls for more research in areas like this.

Tenopyr's request has been matched by many businesses involved with the National Literacy Initiative. Although businesses require that literacy programs meet the demands of cost-efficient and increased productivity, in other words, more literacy must mean more profits, they do seem willing to consider evidence that shows this connection. There is also an increased demand for literacy skills that are flexible and can adapt to changes in job demands. This is a good sign, for it points to th importance of "critical literacy," and literacy training that helps worker to be autonomous and learn on their own.

Along with calling for more research on work-place literacy, businesses have also been calling for "greater communication between industry and schools," which can be translated to mean that schools should adjust their curricula to train students more readily for the precise demands of workplace literacy. Larry Mikulecky in his article "Functional Writing in the Workplace" argues that schools do not prepare students for the kinds of writing that industry demands, writing that involves a variet of tasks at once, reading, writing, interviewing, comparing notes, using figures, and so on. Although Mikulecky's research does support the difference between most schoolroom and workplace literacy demands, unifyin these kinds of writing in favor of the workplace poses several problems. Henri Giroux, for instance, has criticized what he calls the "New Public Philosophy," which links the outcomes of education solely to the needs of the business community. Giroux sees this movement as symptom of the "economic rationality" that already imbues contemporary thinking.[22] As we have already seen, cost-efficiency ratios and demands for productivity are hardly the most reasonable criteria for literacy training in the schools.

Finally, workplace literacy will only be as meaningful as the work itself is meaningful. In many cases, merely informing workers about the entire production process can make a step in that direction. In other cases, however, no amount of literacy, whether functional or critical, wil improve the meaning of the work. If education takes place in this atmosphere, it must take the form of the workers' education described by Samuel Gompers in his autobiography, **Seventy Years of Life and Labor:**

someone is hired to read to workers to divert them from their repetitive labor. Nevertheless, for some workers, the place for literacy will not be at the workplace at all, but during leisure time.

The devaluing of "leisure reading" in favor of "functional" and "task-oriented" literacy is perhaps one of the saddest aspects of most United States literacy programs. Most U.S. literacy campaigns remain committed to the idea that education occurs in school, job training occurs on the job, and leisure reading is saved for retirement. Furthermore, most literacy programs--even those in businesses--remain convinced that literacy programs should be medicines for a "quick-fix." Such is the guiding principle behind the National Adult Literacy Project (December 12, 1983):

General Principles

> Emphasize Immediate and high-impact payoffs. Given the short period of time, the relatively small resources, the salience of the problem, and the timeliness of the issue, the NALP project should focus on high visibility, high impact, short time-frame goals . . . focus on outcomes and the factors and policies that affect these outcomes. . . Restrict the scope of the project . . . to programs . . . which have as their central goal, the improvement of functional literacy for a productive workforce.

Such a strategy seems more useful for selling snakeoil than "promoting literacy," the ostensible goal of the National Adult Literacy Project and the National Literacy Initiative. Perhaps a better strategy for promoting literacy is the creation of literacy environments, the practice of preventative medicine as it were, where literacy can be an option instead of an obstacle. That is the strategy of the most effective literacy programs within school walls. It is time that it became the strategy for programs outside of school walls, as well.

NOTES

NALC

[1] NALC Contributions included: Jeanne S. Chall, Harvard University, "New Views on Developing Basic Skills with Adults"; Thomas M. Duffy, Communication Center, Carnegie Mellon University, "Literacy Instruction in the Military"; John D. Eggert, President Literacy Volunteers of America, Syracuse University, "Concerns in Establishing and Maintaining a Community-Based Adult Literacy Project"; Patricia Cohen Gold, John Hopkins University, "Literacy Training in Penal Institutions"; E.D. Hirsh, University of Virginia, "Cultural Literacy"; Diane M. Longfield, "Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Adults: State-of-the-Art"; Garth L. Mangum, The INstitute for Human Resource Management, University of Utah, "Adult Literacy in Utah: Even a Leader has Unmet Needs"; Alice Bird McCord, National Retail Merchants Association, New York, "The Impact of Basic Skills on Human Resource Management in the Retailing Industry"; Harold W. McGraw, Jr. "Luncheon Address"; John E. Roueche, Director, Community College Leadership Program, University of Texas at Austin, "Literacy Needs and Developments in American Community College"; Thomas G. Sticht, Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, Inc. San Diego, California, "Strategies for Adult Literacy Development"; Mary L. Tenopyr, American Telephone and Telegraph Company, "Realities of Adult Literacy in Work Settings"; Peter A. Waite, Executive Director Laubach Literacy Action, "The Role of Volunteers in Adult Literacy Programs"; Nina Wallenstein, "Literacy and Minority Language Groups: Community Literacy as Method and Goal."

[2] In general, the National Adult Literacy Conference (NALC) points to the continuing significance of the 1978 Ford Foundation Report **Illiteracy in America** prepared by David Harman and Carmen St. John Hunter. While the NALC papers often mention their report, they also reveal that except for minor adjustments, few substantial changes have occurred in either conventional literacy theory and practice or federal public policy in the last decade. Harman and Hunter's work still sets out the major difficulties with US Literacy practices. Major adult literacy programs (whose number totals nearly 10,000) remain in two basic categories: conventional approaches and competency-based approaches.

> **Conventional Approaches** include Voluntary Literacy Organizations (Laubach, National Affiliation for Literacy Advance (NALA), Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), Adult Basic Education, Right to Read, programs in prisons and other correctional facilities, and Library service: and
>
> **Competency-based Approaches** include the military, labor unions, groups like the New York State Division for Youth; Various Cultural and Ethnic Organizations like the Native American Survival Schools, the Barrio Education Project in San Antonio, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Citizenship Education Schools; museums and galleries, and other community-based programs (57-87).

[3] The current Executive Director of Laubach Literacy Action, Peter A. Waite, admitted these practical difficulties in his NALC paper "The role of Volunteers in Adult Literacy Programs." He stressed Harman and Hunter's

1979 proposal that "programs must be rooted in the community they propose to serve. . . .It is important that the personnel who assist in this development process reflect the broad-based community." Nevertheless, Waite also says, citing Jonathon Kozol as an authority, that sometimes "the 'outside spark'" is needed to develop a truly community-based organization."

[4] See Frank Smith, "Making Sense of Reading--and of Reading Instruction," **Harvard Educational Review** 47:3, 386-395.

[5] Specifically, ABE involves three distinct programs: adult basic education, adult secondary education, (ABE), and English as a Second Language (ESL). A variety of teaching materials are used, although most materials are published by Laubach's New Reader's Press and by the **Reader's Digest.**

[6] See Coles and Coppel. 1982.

[7] Several state boards of education, Illinois's for instance, judge the effectiveness of ABE by how many of its students get jobs or further their education. The fact that ABE teachers are under pressure to "produce" future laborers and students may partly explain its unattractiveness. What does it say that adult education becomes completely instrumental? Are there any other reasons to read and write besides working or taking more classes?

[8] Wallenstein believes that "problem-solving" or survival literacy strategies must be rejected in favor of Paulo Freire's method of "problem-posing." Hence, she also rejects "step-by-step" and "workbook approaches" which often display ethnocentricity and an ignorance of ESL learner's life-situation, a pattern that she attempts to change in her own book, **Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom.**

John D. Eggert, President of Literacy Volunteers of America (besides Laubach the largest volunteer literacy program in the United States) adds an interesting note to Wallensteins's ideas: "It is virtually impossible to engage in a one-to-one tutorial without non-reading needs quickly becoming evident. A parent wants to talk about disciplining his child, a worker needs to understand how to deal with her employer, another obviously needs to grow self-confidence. When this happens, both learner and tutor have to confront a variety of decisions: do they have the time to devote to these other needs? Does the tutor have the appropriate knowledge and skills to help? Is it reasonable to put aside dealing with the need to read for the sake of solving these other problems? In practice, these decisions are made fairly easily by the two parties involved." "Concerns in Establishing and Maintaining a Community Based Adult Literacy Project,' John D. Eggert, President, Literacy Volunteers of America. Unfortunately, the idea of basing literacy training around solving these problems is never suggested.

[9] Alonzo Anderson and Peg Griffin have found that "literate practice [in most homes] . . . comes from the businesses and care agencies, the social institutions that surround the family institution" (Anderson, 1983, 21).

[10] See Krashen, 1982, 30-32.

[11] See Perl, S. 1979. The Composing Process of Unskilled College Writers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 13, 317-339.

[12] Chall asserts that a 12th grade reading level is required for most activities required of a citizen today and that standardized testing of adults should be used to measure progress and plan individual programs.

[13] See Elsasser and John-Steiner. 1977. For an account of a literacy project based exactly on this concept.

[14] See Flower, Hayes, and Swarts. 1980. Revising Functional Documents: The scenario principle. Document Design Technical REport. No. 10. Pittsburgh: Carnegie-Mellon University.

[15] See Heath. 1977. Toward an ethnohistory of writing in American education. Paper presented at the NIE Conference on Writing, SWRL, June 1977.

[16] See Sticht. 1980.

[17] "The task and knowledge-centered approaches are now official military policy. In 1977 the General Accounting Office (GAO, 1977) reviewed the literacy training programs (still only recruit level programs) in each of the services and found that they all used a general literacy approach to instruction in which neither the instructional nor the instructional criterion were related to job requirements. . . . The GAO (1977) recommended to the Congress that the criteria and content of the literacy training programs in the services should be made job relevant. In 1978 the Joint House Senate Appropriations committee added teeth to the recommendation" (Duffy, 1984).

[18] It should be emphasized that although the military has a highly efficient workplace literacy program, the military is not the ideal literacy environment, especially when taboos remain against solitary, contemplative studying and "singledmindedness," which the military perceives in any obsesssive behavior, like taking too many books from the library on any one subject.

[19] Traveler's Insurance, for example, has developed the MOST/BEST program that trains around 800 persons a year while paying them minimum wage. Out of this pool about eighteen workers are hired every week. (National Adult Literacy Program Papers, 1984).

[20] The Polaroid Company sponsors reading labs and math tutorials for its employees. Instructors are fellow employees who volunteer. The company considers the cost very small compared to the return on increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, etc. (National Adult Literacy Program Papers. 1984).

[21] Peter F. Drucker. (Personal conversation).

[22] Giroux, 1983. Harvard Educational Review

Literacy Programs: Where to Begin Research

The following is a list of critical sources for beginning a study of adult literacy programs in the United States. They are selected for their comprehensiveness and their bibliographies and are listed in order of importance.

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In Conclusion: Creating Literacy Environments

This paper was another which came out of the literacy seminar, where it was forged as a summary of some of the research described earlier in this volume and as an intervention in the on-going theoretical discussions fostered by the exchanges between members of the seminar and our field experience.

IN CONCLUSION:
CREATING LITERACY ENVIRONMENTS

by Michael Holzman

CREATING LITERACY ENVIRONMENTS

The alarming extent of illiteracy in the United States is usually thought of in terms of those who are so illiterate that they are unable to decipher much more than traffic signs or their own names. These Americans are isolated from the larger society. They are isolated even from one another. However, there is a vastly more numerous group, the functionally illiterate, who form culturally hereditary distinct social environments within the body politic. These are people who can read and write, for the most part at a level usually described as fifth grade, but who hardly use those skills. Shirley Brice Heath in Ways With Words has described their situation and its effects in the South. The working class cultures of her White "Roadville" and Black "Trackton," where all literacy skills beyond simple decipherment are superfluous, typify widespread mechanisms perpetuating social immobility in America. She depicts life in "Roadville" as comparatively rich in activities reinforcing the nuclear family unit and divided rather sharply in accordance with traditional sex roles. The men work in textile mills all their lives; the women do so also, insofar as that is compatible with their primary definition as wives and mothers. School is of increasing importance in this community, but literacy itself is not an active force. The mill jobs do not require it and home life is organized so as to do quite well without it. Heath's "Trackton" appears at first sight to be a contrasting culture. The Black extended family groups are less restrictive in many ways than the nuclear families of "Roadville" and methods of obtaining money are more varied, but here, too, economic survival does not require the active use of literacy skills. In both communities children rarely see adults reading or writing, rarely see any extended texts outside of school. Both communities appear literate, and in a sense they are, but neither would be profoundly changed if literacy were restricted to two or three adults in each. (Nor has the occasional presence of comparatively literate individuals in one or the other of the communities changed the role of literacy there.)

Of course, functional illiteracy (and its extreme manifestation as alphabetical illiteracy) is not limited to the South. Illiteracy acts throughout the nation restricting social mobility, impoverishing lives. When fluent and habitual reading and writing skills are not incorporated in everyday life, people have little hope for anything other than marginalization in contemporary society. This problem cannot be solved by the public schools alone. They are doing what they can already. Unfortunately, in some cases what they are doing is not positive, and indeed, in some cases they are contributing to the perpetuation of illiteracy. Tracking, over-crowding, an emphasis on correctness over fluency, these organizational, economic, and pedagogical factors make schooled alphabetical illiteracy possible and limit the ability of schools to address functional illiteracy. It is widely agreed that a multi-institutional effort, mobilizing broad community resources, is needed if we are to break the illiteracy cycle. The existing adult literacy institutions have been tapped by the Federal Government's National Literacy Initiative. This is a good start, especially as a way for focussing attention on literacy, but it is not enough. As Frank Gaik has demonstrated, the existing adult literacy institutions are also part of the problem. Slogans like "each one teach one" and volunteerism have the effect of maintaining mistaken notions concerning illiteracy, spotlighting decipherment, concealing the importance of functional illiteracy. Success in such programs is the achievement of functional illiteracy. Granted, decipherment skills are better than their absence, but decipherment skills alone are not a socially useful definition of literacy today.

Television takes much of the blame for the decline in literacy skills, but the way in which this occurs is not well understood. It is not merely a matter of wasted hours. The culture of illiteracy itself is perpetuated by the pleasant dreams of the mass media. Those are dreams which exalt Fate. Programming for children is filled with magic and "super heroes;" programming for adults hardly differs in form, only the content of the fantasies, the types of gratification offered, differ. All of us, to some extent, have our consciousnesses formed by those dreams. But those of us who are not citizens of "Roadville" or citizens of "Trackton," those of us who are members of the literate cuture, receive alternative messages, also. We live in a stream of symbols so wide and various as to allow choices. The culture of illiteracy, on the other hand, is a culture of the powerless; they have few choices, few channels of symbolic communication among which to choose. One effect of this is to give them an inadequate representation of reality. The media to which they have access--television, movies--present them with a world made up of dreams and nightmares, a world of violence and not of reason. As Olga Connolly has said, they have no way to learn that the society that envelopes their streets is ruled by a form of reason, however distorted, and therefore they have little incentive to gain more knowledge. Another effect is a direct consequence of this. Their access to the general symbolic environment is so narrow and so forceful that their only possible exercise of freedom in this regard is that of rejection. Are we to wonder at this? The functionally illiterate, from their own point of view, are already the passive receivers of a deluge of messages from the dominant culture, messages which in many cases have the force of commands. Why, they might well ask, should they read more? In order to be more at the mercy of commercial and governmental messages? They know little of alternative messages, those messages which, through their sheer complexity and number, convey knowledge and power. It is not unreasonable, given what they know, that the functionally illiterate seek refuge in the isolated cultural manifestations which are familiar to them, over which they have some control. The consequences of this move are unfortunate; what at first seems a refuge becomes a prison. Fleeing ideological domination by what Basil Bernstein called the elaborated code, they find themselves sealed off from the benefits of economic success by the restricted codes of group identity. The price for cultural independence is economic domination.

It is not that they have failed to learn some key literacy skill. Neither at home, nor in the schools, nor on the job have these people lived in an environment which encouraged and demanded literacy skills beyond the bare technologies of inscription and decipherment. Reading and writing are not routine parts of their lives and--thus--even if they wanted to do those things they would have problems reading and writing fluently. As Heath has shown, dominated cultures in America (both White and Black) do not often use literacy, beyond decipherment, either at home or on the job. This in itself perpetuates the cultural isolation of these Americans, restricts their opportunities. It may be, as a matter of fact, a crucial element of the definition of class in modern America. People who do not use literacy in everyday life are likely to have severely limited educational opportunities, contribute little to decision making, to the setting of social, political, or business goals.

How is this to be changed? How can these large populations of the functionally illiterate be brought into the modern communications structure, which is, in effect, the social, the political, structure of contemporary America? It is not, I repeat, that they cannot read or write. It is that they do not. And they pass on to their children their attitudes toward and their uses of literacy. If we are to avoid a caste system based on literacy, the culture of illiteracy itself must be canged. It is an institutional problem. Treating it as a "special education" problem restricted to isolated individuals is a method of perpetuating it.

Most thought and work associated with illiteracy has concentrated on alphabetical illiteracy, which is fairly exotic, to the neglect of the crucially important problems of functional illiteracy. The research of the Model Literacy Project with the California Conservation Corps has found few corpsmembers who are alphabetically illiterate, in spite of the fact that corpsmembers form a population which is fairly representative of young adults who have not been academically successful. Not more than five percent of the corpsmembers are unable to decipher words. As the essays by Lee Leeson, Irene Clark, and Elspeth Stuckey demonstrate, those who are in this category are very difficult to help. Their isolation from everyday life is extreme; their coping strategies are elaborate; they conceal themselves. These are the classical subjects of voluntary literacy programs. It may be true that it is not economically feasible to reach them in any other way; if so, I am skeptical of the possibilities of large scale success under any circumstances with our present social arrangements. In most cases alphabetical illiterates are a testimonial to the failures of primary education. It is there that a broad social solution to this aspect of the problem must be sought, not for them, but for their children.

But neither are most of the corpsmembers functionally literate. Why do these young adults have literacy difficulties? Most of them have had many years of formal schooling, all of them have the opportunity to attend night schools, adult schools, continuation schools, yet they have not learned much beyond basic literacy skills and they do not, typically, seek out educational opportunities. Their literacy problems are not chiefly technical --dialect interference, lack of knowledge of the conventional spelling system, etc. The first task for those who would intervene on their behalf is to activate their existing literacy skills. Literacy is foreign and must be naturalized. This process works best if it is a powerfully engaging activity, not a routine and marginal pastime or task. The intensity of this experience is needed to break the educational inertia of people for whom functional illiteracy has, perversely, a positive function; reinforcing group identifications, lessening *anomie.*

Although those who are viewed as illiterate do not often read or write, they do talk. The fluency with which they talk contrasts sharply with their stilted writing. In *Language in the Inner City* Labov argues passionately that the functionally illiterate people whom he studied are not verbally impoverished. On the contrary, they live in a rich atmosphere of word play, which is rewarded by prestige within the group. Talk as display in Labov's Harlem is a way of cementing group relations while rejecting school culture. It is only the "lame," those excluded from street life, who negotiote a modus vivandi with the rules of school speech. How else are they to survive? This facility of speech is true of many such populations. It is obvious that for all of us speech precedes writing. And yet, to return to the school origins of illiteracy, how often do we encourage our students to speak compared to the frequency with which we tell them to be quiet? In the classroom the teacher's monopoly of spontaneous speech is an expression of her authority. As Lee Leeson has observed, unauthorized student speech is often interpreted as resistance to authority; it may then become resistance to education. Here again schools mirror the larger society. The radio and television speak; we listen. Supervisors give orders; we obey. Eventually it becomes difficult even for members of subcultures in which verbal skills are highly rewarded to use those skills in conventional school environments. If we are to bring people out of cultures of illiteracy, literacy must be presented as active, not passive. It is more reasonable to begin doing this with writing than with reading. Writing is as active as speech and it puts those who write in a position closer to those who participate in the dominant culture. (Even the alphabetically illiterate may learn more quickly when they "write" their own texts, that is, dictate them to someone with inscription skills.)

Communication skills need to be exercised before they can be transferred to writing. Further, for those who have not acquiesced in school discipline, there must be another reason to write before it is reasonable to write. Some cultural communities (such as Heath's White working class community "Roadville"), discourage talk, grant prestige, especially among males, to the silent. Other people have encountered that discouragement in school. In literacy programs talk should be encouraged. Michele Weathers has shown that plays can be read, poems recited. It is easy to forget the impoverishment of the education experienced by many of our citizens. When one of the corpsmembers read Poe's "Raven" at a Christmas party organized to celebrate the first semester of the project, some of us were bored and rather embarrassed at the experience of sitting through the recitation, although we duly noted that the reading was done correctly. Then we realized that the corpsmembers were not bored. They appreciated the achievement the recitation represented for their friend. These are common exercises in schools that serve functionally literate cultures and communities, less common elsewhere. In rural schools with highly developed tracking systems, much attention is given to the encouragement of dramatic talent and other public verbal forms among "gifted" children. How much experience of this sort is allowed the less "gifted"? Too often tracking is a method of allocating limited resources in a way that insures that the culture of illiteracy will remain intact. Reading aloud, play-acting, and similar activities bring together their richly verbal everyday world and that of literacy. And in the case of those whose verbal world, too, is impoverished--due to isolation or the imitations of aspects of other cultural norms--reading aloud itself may be an unfamliar activity that requires encouragement.

Another bridge between verbal skills and literacy is that of the interview technique described by Lawrence Wayman. Learners may interview one another, or, in an extremely powerful technique, conduct group interviews of representatives of institutions, taking notes, creating a collection of biographical essays. Wayman has adapted this practice from his pastoral work with impoverished senior citizens. The corpsmembers he worked with made appointments to see a university vice president, the chairman of the board of a bank, local police official. Before the interviews the corpsmembers studied the careers of these men, dividing the course of the interview between them, planning the interview so that they would be in control of it. The satisfaction of confronting a powerful person from a position of strength had the practical result of demonstrating to the corpsmembers their ability to control a verbal exchange in the wider culture, demonstrating also the advantages of doing so. The written account of this--as a letter to the interviewee, as a Project newspaper article--became the record of the successful activation of their literacy.

Writing, as is evident in this example, need not be a solitary activity. The fact that the classical location of writing includes the desk, the locked room, the lone green shaded lamp is simply a matter of certain social norms. In other societies the scene of written communication is a small group. Even in our society we have types of writing which are collective in nature. The newspaper rather than the diary may be used as a model for the scene and process of writing. Our first Project newspaper began with that of a group of on-native speakers of English working with our researcher Judith Rodby. Their control of the newspaper immediately reversed the disadvantaged position that they were in with regard to literacy.

Other corpsmembers submitted articles to them. Everyone looked forward to each issue of the Project newspaper they had started. These group efforts enhance the self-confidence of each person in the gorup. The members of the group exchange ideas, revise drafts, refine the products of this process and experience the benefits of cooperation. At the same time, each person in the group sees her own contribution making a difference. Those who have some literacy skills are introduced to the world of reading and writing through writing on subjects they choose as important to them--in such a way that it matters, in such a way that they feel the power of literacy supported as much by the group as by the instructor.

Of course, even in the group setting, certain literacy activities are individual, but each such project is set in the evolving context of a culture where literacy is valued. Our experience suggests that these individual and group projects become very important to learners and that they expect the collaborators to be genuinely involved with them. In combining these activities strong group identities and interests develop in a context of the individual awareness of the distinct contributions to be made and in which learners come to accept such responsibilities. Individual knowledge of syntax, punctuation and spelling could, if necessary, be brought to bear in a spontaneous manner. This is also true for observation techniques, analytical thinking and study skills. There is a general concensus among composition researchers that fluency precedes correctness, that writing must be separated from editing. It is a truism that a population which may be similar to that which I have been referring to here as the functionally illiterate, "basic writers," practice overcorrection, erasing two words for every three inscribed. The newspaper model is particularly useful to make the point that writing should precede editing. Some working to put out a newspaper are writers; others can be editors.

We have found it imperative while working with functionally illiterate young adults to refrain from testing them. They are familiar with being tested and failing. Testing itself is a strong disincentive to the development of functional literacy, as it is to other areas of education. All too often testing is not something done to help learners, it is something done to help teachers--to reassure us, to reassure our supervisors, to obtain research data, to obtain grants. Some of these motivations are valid. Unobtrusive measures can be found to satisfy them. However, anything that looks like a test will reinforce beliefs and behaviors which we wish to change. Writing can "open up" people who are not functionally literate. Testing closes them off. They have probably never been asked to express anything substantial in writing. It takes an enormous amount of work to build conditions which will activate their literacy as newspaper articles or poems. This has a strong effect--it brings them to, or across, the boundary between the cultures of functional illiteracy and functional literacy. Literacy becomes public. Why risk losing it? If we are sincerely interested in discovering whether our efforts have been successful, we can ask them.

In our literacy projects, reading comes after writing. This can not be school reading. "Readers" are fake books, books meant to be irrelevant. Reading should be meaningful even for functionally literate undergraduates: so much the more for people for whom reading is an unusual activity. Some of the literacy groups develop their own reading materials. We feel that reading should also occur outside that special environment. Betty Bamberg looked for books that the corpsmembers would read. We then made these available in the Writing Center and in the vans in which the corpsmembers spend much time traveling to remote work sites. We encouraged them to take books home, share them with others. We rather hope that many will keep them. It is obvious that books and magazines must be in the physical environment before they can become part of the cultural environment. Isolated libraries are not sufficient. These conceal books and keep them safe for what Frank Smith would call the club of readers, keep them safe from the functionally illiterate. Once someone's interest in reading is awakened, it must be continually nurtured with interesting reading materials. Books in a collection that has to be sought out are not in the environment.

In addition to intensive literacy training and education, we have tried to make extensive but unobtrusive workplace environmental changes as part of our literacy program. Jobs often make knowledge and literacy irrelevant and difficult to obtain. Jobs are frequently classified with references to literacy prerequisites and demands. This is a seemingly natural and harmless procedure with far-reaching consequences. Until the arrival of the Millennium, most of us will spend most of our waking hours earning our living, on the job. The way in which our time is spent, there, has a very strong influence on the type of person we are, everywhere. Particularly as competing behavioral infuences--family, religion, politics--ebb, the influence of the job environment increases. If my job involves either the reading or writing of reports, and that is practically the definition of middle class employment, I will be functionally literate, per force. If, on the other hand, my job is that of the unskilled or skilled manual laborer (and this is true also for increasing number of "white collar" laborers), functional literacy becomes a leisure-time activity, requiring strong cultural incentives for its maintenance. There is, unfortunately, a tendency among management consultants and the like to deliberately minimize the literacy demands for all but the managerial applicant pool: employers design jobs so that literacy is practically superfluous. Workers who spend their lives in such workplaces often find that the literacy skills that they may have had, unexercised, atrophy. Faced with a workforce made functionally illiterate by a lifetime of jobs denying the utility and importance of literacy, employers are reinforced in their belief that occupational definitions and requirements should be as narrow as possible--as dehumanizing as possible.

We learn unless prevented from doing so, or, rather, if prevented from learning in a humanizing way, people will learn to lose their humanity, they will learn that they have lost their humanity. Sartre writes of women working on an assembly line becoming assimilated to the machines which they tend, becoming lived by the rhythms of the machine. Is this not true for all of us who labor? The great machine of modern society (as it was in Babylon) is the sheer fact of the organization of work. Most organizations stratify literacy intensive tasks. Staff personnel above the clerical level spend all day reading and writing and discussing what is to be done, why, and how. Non-supervisory personnel are given work which requires little if any reading or writing or knowledge of the reasons for what was done or why. The world from the point of view of management is one of continual problem solving, involving the acquisition and analysis of enormous amounts of information. The world from the point of view of the corpsmembers, for instance, is the same as it always is for the functionally illiterate; it makes no sense; it makes few literacy demands. One day they are planting trees, the next they are fighting fires. Why? Because they had been told to, of course. They are, after all, learning work discipline (having, in most cases, refused or failed to do so in high school). But work discipline is not enough if a person wishes to participate fully in modern society. (The difference between the culture of "Trackton" and that of "Roadville," is to be sure, exactly the inculcation of work discipline present in the latter, but that is no longer sufficient to signal a change in class status. Both are functionally illiterate, their children doomed to marginalization, except insofar as accident and Fate protect them. The jobs available to them reinforce this.)

We have set out, then, in order to complement the classroom strategies given above, not to decrease but to increase the literacy demands made upon the corpsmembers on the job. What else is to be done if illiteracy is not to be reinforced? If lessons and habits learned in class are not to be lost? Increasing the functions of literacy in the workplace is a matter of minutiae. The philosopher's stone of social change, then, takes among other unlikely shapes that of procedures manuals. Forms must be revised so that blanks are not filled in, but, rather, so that complete sentences, perhaps even paragraphs are required. Supervisors must explain tasks, so that those supervised can file work-completion reports which include why something was done, and how, as well as that it was done. It is fortunate that the corpsmembers work at a great variety of tasks and locations. Much information then becomes obviously relevant. If the corpsmembers are planting trees in the Central Valley, or making trails in the Sierra, their work takes place in a context that is unfamliar, which can become the occasion of the provision of a great deal of information. Simultaneously with arranging for our literacy project, the C.C.C. with the cooperation of members of the Audubon Society had begun training supervisory personnel in conservation and environmental awareness. Thus the supervisors become equipped to become instructors in these matters for the corpsmembers. The activation of functional literacy can become an unobtrusive part of this process. Literacy education is not another unit of the "Corpsmember Development" section of the procedures manual, beside that of, say, Conservation Awareness. It is part of the unit on Conservation Awareness, part of frequent work-completion reports, part of tools familiarization, part of the process by which complaints are handled.

The U.S.C./California Writing Project has conducted week-long writing institutes for the supervisory staff of the C.C.C. and follow-up sessions for designated literacy coordinators so that writing and reading instruction skills can be imparted to supervisory C.C.C. personel on a continuing basis. Each supervisor, with training from Audubon and from the Writing Project, will be an educator also. If this comes about we will have achieved an important goal for literacy education; the workplace itself will be treated as the location for the enhancement of literacy skills in an integral relation with the work process. These lessons concerning the integration of literacy education with the ordinary tasks of life can be applied to less favorable situations than that presented by the collaboration between the California Conservation Corps and the University of Southern California. In the schools, literacy tasks can be joined with other aspects of education. Wherever possible examinations in mathematics and physics, physical education and automotive shop, should be essay examinations. Multiple choice and fill-in the blank examinations encourage functional illiteracy, encourage the notion that all that needs to be known are specific, quite limited "answers" to the teachers' questions. This view inhibits educational development in general and is a disaster for literacy education in particular. Writing across the curriculum approaches may be extended in the public schools, making ever teacher, every administrator, every staff person, a writing teacher.

Collaboration between U.S.C. and the California Conservation Corps has occurred under peculiarly favorable circumstances, but it has yielded results which are generalizable. If we recognize that literacy is not simply inscription and decipherment skills, but is an activity which contributes to the creation of a cultural environment, making possible full participation in the communications and information culture which shapes society, then measures can be taken in primary schools to increase investment in literacy education, broadly construed, among students who come from homes outside the functionally literate population; in secondary and post-secondary education to apply the techniques of small group cooperative work outlined above which create an active literacy; in the workplace to redesign jobs so that they are literacy enhancing. For many years Americans treated their land as a vast storehouse from which wealth need only be taken. Now most of us are convinced that resources must be renewed, that we are stewards of the land. So too with our fellow citizens. We must develop an attitude of stewardship toward them also.

There are large numbers of illiterate young adults in the United States. They mayor of New York cites a figure of 60,000 illiterates for his city. There are probably ten times that number who are functionally illiterate, capable of deciphering individual word, but unable to integrate reading and writing skills into their everyday life--unable, therefore, to live and work in a cultural environment requiring or utilizing literacy. In cities like New York and Los Angeles this is in part a reflection of their multi-ethnic populations, their strained social fabrics. It is, nonetheless, there as elsewhere, primarily a result of interactions between the public schools and the community, interactions in which there are no easily identified villains, but in which there are also few heroes. The consequences of alphabetical illiteracy and functional illiteracy in late-twentieth-century America are severe on a number of levels. The individuals in question find it difficult to obtain and keep jobs, easy to become victims of technological changes in the workplace, easy to become wards of the state in one way or another. This expense is measured in wasted lives, increasing prison poulations, larger welfare rolls. The functionally literate contribute their mind's best work to American society. The functionally illiterate can only contribute the labor of their bodies. Can we, as a society, continue to live thus?